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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

URBAN AGRICULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN CHICAGO:

HOW ORGANIZATIONS SHAPE THE
EXPERIENCE OF NATURE AND POVERTY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

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CHAPTER ONE
EXPERIENCING SUSTAINABILITY:
DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY IN CHICAGO

In the past two decades, cities have increasingly looked to ‘the environment’ as a source of economic growth. Both political-economic and environmental changes have contributed to this phenomenon. For urban areas, central to the economic changes are the extraction of capital, revenue, and jobs via processes of deindustrialization. The effects of these processes of industrialization and deindustrialization on the urban environment, not to mention on climate change, have contributed to cultural shifts in how the urban environment is viewed by political elites, planners, and developers. Today, the environment is viewed by these groups as an economic engine that produces jobs, and as a and as a source of health that is one of the amenities of contemporary urban life for the economically prosperous.

In order to attract young skilled workers, particularly in technological industries, cities have sought to develop urban environmental amenities such as parks, urban hiking and biking trails, community gardens, small nature preserves, and ‘green’ streetscapes. These 25-to-35 year olds tend to be more concerned about the environment, in general, and they eschew car ownership more than previous generations, making urban areas and the ease of access to what is perceived as ‘culture’ and cultural events and activities very attractive. Despite the desire to live in urban areas and not own cars, this group of people tends to also be very concerned over health and ‘leading the good life,’ which includes access to nature. Beginning in the 1990s, many cities have sought to remedy the perception of urban living as bleak and surrounded by concrete by developing the

aforementioned amenities, oftentimes in cooperation with private developers and the industries whose workforce they are seeking to attract.

Municipalities are also the primary site of governmental action on climate change, because for the most part, state governments and the federal government have failed to act to stem the speed of climate change or seriously plan to ameliorate its harms. The speed of climate change has already stressed many municipal systems and services, particularly in terms of water delivery and wastewater processing. In addition, rising temperatures threaten urban tree coverage; much of the recent work of cities to plant trees is in order to combat the urban heat island effect. Many cities fear that the native trees that they worked so hard to plant will not be able to survive the anticipated temperature changes.

Another factor that has propelled the development of such urban, green amenities is the question of what to do with brownfields and factories left behind from deindustrialization. Often, if such dumping grounds are not cleaned up, the pollution continues to harm people living adjacent neighborhoods. Additionally, there are also many attempts to convert such factories or warehouse spaces into luxury condominiums and lofts. Such living spaces are highly sought after by young, middle class 'tech workers' and other urban professionals looking for larger and open-concept living spaces and the trendy look in housing associated with urban decay, which includes exposed beams, brick, and duct work and other industrial artefacts. Cities have also worked to reclaim these factory shells and convert them into business incubators, thereby transforming them into smaller and modular spaces conducive to 'start-up' businesses in

technology fields and artisanal production that includes the transformation of agricultural products, some grown in cities, into value-added goods.

Although most of these sustainability initiatives aim to meet the needs and desires of young urban professionals, it is often assumed that everyone across the socio-economic spectrum benefits from such initiatives. The poor and the working classes are rarely placed at the center of these visions of green urban spaces, but are understood to be free to enjoy some of these amenities. The poor and working class are expected to be the beneficiaries of the jobs created by these start-up companies, and via the presumably growing the tax base and, therefore benefit from improved public services. To a lesser extent, many urban areas have geared such sustainability efforts to directly solving problems related to poverty, such as crime or ill health. This has primarily been addressed through green jobs training programs, community gardens, and food-related business incubators and training centers geared toward the poor. However, these often resemble and reproduce the former sustainability initiatives, because existing businesses and middle class entrepreneurs tend to benefit from the government contracts to provide the associated services, and the work of such programs is often aimed at developing the amenities that middle class people desire and in middle class neighborhoods. Indeed, what urban sustainability and sustainable development actually means, how it is practiced, and the outcomes it produces are often purported instead of investigated.

Too frequently it is assumed that these activities are in everyone's best interest and that everyone benefits from these practices. In this sense, urban sustainability is assumed to be 'one size fits all.' Similarly, such activities too often parse the environment and the economy. By this I mean that politicians, planners, and developers see any sort of

environmental improvement or economic activity as evidence of a sustainability initiative's success. Relatedly, it must be noted that sustainable development in the context of U.S. cities is typically driven by the actions of government, in which public money is used to subsidize and promote private businesses and enterprises. This is a very narrow idea of development, based on the assumption that private enterprise is more efficient and creates more value for the public than the public sector is able to do, and that these benefits all 'trickle-down' or that the private sector activity produces more 'positive externalities' than all the benefits produced by intentional public sector actions (beyond subsidizing the private sector).

However, criticism of urban sustainability falls short in terms of providing any sort of reconstructive vision, often dismissing any possibility of sustainable development as a positive force. This includes identifying initiatives or organizations which are 'doing it right,' or recognizing positive examples. These counterexamples may be dismissed as being hyper-localized and, therefore, not being replicable in other communities or scalable due to their specific local or regional context including a unique combination of environment and economy. Moreover, such critiques fail to closely examine the complex social relations surrounding such initiatives, including the different potentials and limitations of hybrid organizational structures that mix public, non-profit, and for-profit missions and strategies in response to unique local conditions. And finally, reconstructive examples of urban sustainable development may be missed or dismissed by critics because they are judging outcomes according to a narrow perspective, often that of white, educated, middle class people. But it should not be assumed that poor people and people of color experience sustainable development in the same way and

desire the same outcomes and judge sustainable development according to the same benefits. In sum, varied social scientists have engaged different aspects of sustainability, but none have capture the diversity of perspectives, the importance of hybrid forms, and too often, they have only examined failures rather than who wins and who loses.

Research Questions

The central goal of this dissertation research is to be able understand how marginalized communities experience urban sustainability. By studying the experiences of people in three urban sustainability initiatives and enterprises which all have a mission related to sustainability and sustainable development, I will be able to see how different organizational structures shape the ways in which the organizations engage poor people and people of color. Guiding my research are two subquestions: How do poor people and people of color experience urban sustainable development through these various initiatives and enterprises? This includes how they define the economic, social, and environmental benefits of urban sustainability, and How does organization form shape the distribution of outcomes of sustainable development? I propose to examine the experience of sustainable development as it actually happens at the local level, from a perspective of the bottom up. By ‘bottom up,’ I mean from the perspective of the people to whom the benefits of sustainable development are said to trickle down: the marginalized communities who are believed to be secondary beneficiaries of development initiated by white, educated, middle class volunteers or entrepreneurs. Using extended interviews and participant-observation, I examine the experience of participants in three Chicago-based urban sustainability initiatives: Greencorps Chicago, the Chicago Honey Co-op and Growing Power, Inc. In Greencorps Chicago green jobs

training program, a public-private partnership primarily serving formerly-incarcerated, black males, the participants include: job trainees, workforce development staff, 'green' industry professionals, and city administrators. In Chicago Honey Co-op, a social enterprise staffed by mostly white people and located in a poor, black neighborhood, I examine the experiences of the employees and volunteers associated with the co-op. In Growing Power, Inc., an enterprising, multi-faceted community-based farming organization serving black communities in Milwaukee and on Chicago's south and west sides, the perspectives I highlight include the organizers and farm staff.

Drawing on and contributing to theories from environmental sociology, urban political ecology, race & ethnicity, and the sociology of culture, I show that people who initiate and manage these programs, and the low-wage earners and job trainees who participate in them, experience sustainable urban development in very different ways. I explain how different people experience these initiatives: how they envision their environment, how they enact community, and what kinds of work they find fulfilling. My work demonstrates that achieving more equitable distributions of environmental and economic 'goods' works best when they are begun by community groups, and when the groups are responsive and accountable to the wider community. More specifically, such community-based solutions must include organization and solidarity appropriate to the community as well as strategies to participate in economic relationships on the terms of the community.

Environmental Sociology and the Critique of Sustainability

Despite the growing prevalence of the paradigm of sustainability among politicians, planners, and practitioners, the concept of sustainability is highly contested.

There is little agreement on answers to the questions of what is to be sustained, for whom, and for how long? This lack of specificity has been pointed out by many scholars, many of whom have taken the criticism of sustainability a step further, saying not only is the definition of sustainability vague, if not meaningless, but that the coupling of sustainability and development are intrinsically oxymoronic, since, in their view, capitalist economic development is incapable of respecting ecological limitations (Paehlke 1989; Blassingame 1998; Fuentes 1998; Wheeler 1998; Agyeman et al. 2003; Agyeman 2005; Martino 2009). In making this critique, they also demarcate nature and environment as limiting factors in shaping sustainability efforts, to the neglect of explorations of the range of human possibilities for sustainability.

According to Agyeman & Evans (1995), sustainability is a political construct, as opposed to an objective technical or scientific goal. They liken it to notions of freedom and democracy, which also have contested meanings and are often used as ideologies to legitimize public policy or private sector actions. By contrast, to a great extent, U.S. environmental sociology has used an objective, technical definition of sustainability. That definition is some variation of the following: sustainability refers to society's ability to stay within the capacity of the global ecosystem to process human waste and replenish the resources consumed. The reason that this definition of sustainability is more or less agreed upon within U.S. environmental sociology is due to the scale at which most scholars are working: typically, at a national or global level. In particular, *treadmill of production* theorists and *ecological modernization* theorists alike are working on a macro-scale, examining questions of larger political-economic processes and their outcomes. To look at sustainability as a political construct as Agyeman and Evans

suggest would produce myriad localized variations of the concept. As a result, the standard environmental sociology definition of sustainability becomes hard to contest or examine critically, or to understand at the regional or local level.

Still, environmental sociologists *have* been critical of the concept of sustainability as a fundamentally material practice, and of projects undertaken under the guise of sustainable development, again, with a lens that illuminates the global and national scale. Critics have shown that increased attention and commitment to sustainable objectives has done little on a macro-scale to curb the increasing rates of resource extraction, growing carbon emissions, and industrial and post-consumer waste (York, et al. 2009; Faber 2008). Relatedly, they have shown that the economic, environmental, and health benefits related to sustainability initiatives in the United States are disproportionately enjoyed by the white middle class, while the ‘environmental bads’ appear to disproportionately burden blacks as well as residents of poor countries where resources are extracted and the waste of the developed world is dumped (Pellow and Brehm 2013; Pellow et al. 2009; Gould and Lewis 2008). These studies point to a fundamental failure of the “sustainable development” paradigm and its global enactment with regard to promoting equality and improving human and other life on the planet.

While these studies provide important critical analyses of sustainability at the national and international level, they have two shortcomings. First, they do not recognize counter-examples, particularly at the local and regional level. Clearly, not all sustainable development initiatives promote inequality. Different communities and organizations successfully connect economic development and environmental improvement. It is important to identify such organizations and communities and figure out what factors

allow for success, especially for a wide range of citizens. Second, the abstraction and ‘realism’ of macro-level analyses tends to dismiss the lived experiences of participants in these organizations. As a result, most analyses of sustainability tend to use a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model, as if everyone agreed on the way to balance human needs and values with ongoing environments. Attending to variation allows for different cultural understandings of ‘environmental goods’ as well as what different individuals and communities understand the economic and social benefits are--and what they should be. Such a perspective is of value in addressing sustainability controversies, especially in democratic settings.

Environmental Justice and Different Ways of Valuing the Environment

While environmental sociology perspectives provide important critiques of sustainability discourse and related institutions, they provide very few depictions of meaningful resistance, resilience, and successful strategies of survival for people and communities confronting institutions bent on alienation and stratification. Instead, the field has been content to examine environmental sustainability issues from what I call a *deficit approach*, meaning they illuminate the distribution of environmental ‘bads’ such as industrial and non-point source pollution and local unwanted land uses (LULUs) such as the placement of waste disposal facilities and coal burning power plants. The prime example is the environmental justice and environmental racism literature, which tends to present the natural world as a realm of necessity or a source of harm for people. The evidence of detrimental health impacts due to the uneven distribution of environmental bads is overwhelming and must continue to be brought to the attention of the mainstream. However, this body of literature tends to see environmental justice as simply the absence

of harm, or deficits, as opposed to examining environmental “goods” that contribute to community-building and possibly insulate people from the harmful effects of capitalism, such as exploitation and toxic exposure. As opposed to examining deficits, I propose examining how marginalized groups of people experience and define the *benefits* of urban sustainability as well.

One notable exception in the deficit-oriented environmental justice literature is Taylor’s (2009) urban environmental history of the United States. Central to her analysis is the exercise of power by both dominant and subordinate groups, which she analyzes through the lenses of social control and grassroots resistance. Taylor shows how elites used various environmental initiatives, such as public health and poverty reform campaigns and the development of parks and recreational spaces, as ways of maintaining social order. In this framework, she is on common ground with other analysts who emphasize deficits, environmental bads, and large-scale patterns of inequality. Yet Taylor’s work is distinctive because she shows how poor urbanites resisted the effects of these initiatives, which usually contributed to substandard living conditions and denied access to environmental amenities. In this sense, Taylor reframes U.S. environmentalism by shedding light on its urban roots and by identifying the ways that the poor, and specifically, African American poor people in cities, have been able to gain some modicum of control over the environmental conditions that have harmed them. Taylor’s is a reconstructive vision in the sense that she highlights important environmental gains according to the preferences of people of color and poor urbanites achieved through resistance. However, Taylor’s work is also a reminder of the limitations of social movements and resistance and the centrality of government intervention in sustaining

such gains by regulating environmental bads and creating, maintaining, or improving environmental amenities. What is needed are analyses of how and why environmental benefits for the poor and people of color can be built in and regularized, rather than having them exist only as results of periodic social movements and be characterized as the absence of harm.

And, despite the shortcomings that accompany the deficit approach, mainly illuminating environmental bads and ignoring environmental goods, environmental justice scholars *have* shown that there are diverse ways to think about how society connects and combines the environment and the economy. More specifically, environmental justice and other scholars have shown that there are diverse understandings of the ‘environment’ and how it is valued. These diverse conceptions of environment and nature are often analyzed by researchers who are interested in specifically “urban” nature, and the ways in which it is understood by city dwellers. Scholarship on Chicago in particular offers a particularly rich source of knowledge about the understandings.

Urban Nature in the Social Sciences

In trying to connect urbanism and nature, urban studies and other social sciences that address issues of urban life repeat many of the same problems as environmental sociology and environmental justice scholarship. These gaps include the realist view of nature of urban anthropologists and the social capital deficit-approach of urban sociologists. In an urban setting like Chicago, one of the critical questions to understand is how groups engaged in “re-naturing” the city draw upon cultural ideas about who they are and could be, and what, in turn, nature is and could be. Understanding the answer to

these kinds of questions sheds light on what these groups envision as potential alternatives to contemporary social relations and ways of knowing nature and, consequently, possibilities for social change and political action.

Again, what urban social scientists, and many practitioners of sustainable development, have surprisingly overlooked is the social construction of nature and the environment. Like much of the environmental justice literature, urban anthropologists in particular have adopted a realist view of nature which seems to privilege a pastoral nature of an ex-urban variety or at even imaginaries of wilderness. Deficits of nature-as-wilderness are thought to be part of the dehumanizing of urban populations, contributing to lower quality of life as well as to physical and psychological ailments. For example, urban anthropology that examines human-nature interaction, particularly studies of community gardens (see Bartlett 2005), appear to subscribe to a familiar trope: as urbanization and capitalism expand urban dwellers have become increasingly estranged from nature. This distancing from nature is said to contribute to negative physical and psychological health. Yet this kind of “nature” cannot be reproduced in urban areas.

Moreover, scholars of urban life have done little work connecting issues of race with the symbolic aspects of nature and the environment. For example, von Hassle (2002; 2005) examines the communities that develop around struggles for community gardens on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. The extent of von Hassle’s analysis of race is simply as a variable contributing to community diversity; instead she is concerned with the working class status of the actors. Yet urban scholars who do study race seem to examine social capital and ignore the natural environment, perpetuating the society-nature divide on which classical sociological theory is based. And, they treat the poor and people of color

as if they were themselves “realist” objects—bodies—but not as culturally complex communities with varied ideas about environment and nature.

Urban sociologists that has examined the development of the housing projects, particularly in Chicago, has reinforced such narratives by focusing almost exclusively on “social capital” and by highlighting the lack of nature in terms of the built environment. One such example is Vankatesh’s (2000) examination of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes, the largest concentrated public housing development of its time where only seven percent of the land was occupied by physical structures and the rest was paved over with only sporadic patches of heavily trampled grass. Such depictions of a “nature deficit” imply that public housing residents did not interact with nature on a daily basis. Indeed, there was “nature,” with which they interacted, but its character was not fleshed out.

Urban Political Ecology

As I argue above, urban areas are often considered devoid of nature in theory and research in the social sciences. Even urban policy has largely neglected considerations of nature beyond provisions of parks and recreation. However, “nature” is prevalent in urban areas: they are home to a variety of plants and animals, both domesticated and undomesticated; the built environment is largely constructed of natural resources and weaves together social and environmental effects; and urban areas are focal points for the commodification of nature and facilitate various matrices of environmental flows. Moreover, they are sites where wind, heat and cold and water move and affect life (Cronin 1991; Heynen et al. 2006; Hinchcliffe and Whatmore 2006). These works show that cities are undeniably important sites of the unstable and ever-changing relationship between humans and other elements of the biological world. The sociological study of

sustainability can benefit from theoretical and analytical contributions from this version of urban political ecology, that problematizes the character of urban environments.

Urban political ecologists argue that nature and society are co-produced, as opposed to independent and inherent phenomena (Smith 1984; Blaikie 1985; Blaikie and Bloomfield 1987; Harvey 1996; Castree and Braun 2001; Keil 2003, 2005). A second distinguishing feature of this approach is that analysts examine how power relations influence who has access to “natural” and other resources, the quality of those resources, and how those resources are used (Swyngedouw 2004). According to Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003: 898), “The political program... of urban political ecology is to enhance the democratic content of socioenvironmental construction by identifying the strategies through which a more equitable distribution of social power and more inclusive mode of environmental production can be achieved.” In my view, urban political ecology contributes a vision of democracy and justice to the sociology of sustainability.

Despite these commitments to understand co-construction and resources, too often, urban political ecology draws heavily on Marxist ideas of power and nature and repeats the pitfalls found in other Marxists’ analysis of culture: they often treat it as something that is simply the product of structural conditions. For example, urban political ecology often assumes the ‘best uses’ of urban space for locals, such as Heynen, Perkins, and Roy’s (2006) examination of tree canopy in urban centers, where they argue for more tree coverage. This impacts other possible uses of land, including uses that low income people might prefer to more tree coverage such as recreation areas or spaces for urban farming. Historically, political ecology has examined struggles over land. In the contemporary “greening” of urban areas, access to land is one of many possible

outcomes, however, and is best viewed not as a taken-for-granted good, but as one possible answer to the question of how to co-organize nature and people in urban areas. As I noted earlier, too often, the preferences of the middle classes and companies are at the center of urban ecology projects, and for the middle classes, tree canopies are an important benefit. For this reason, the analysis of the distribution of benefits of ‘greening’ urban areas should start with, or at a minimum always include, the perspective of those “at the bottom,” whom technocrats, politicians, and civil society have promised will be the beneficiaries of sustainable development. This perspective necessitates understanding their social world and how they perceive it. One of the set of tools that offers promise for doing is a cluster of scholarship that examines variations in local sustainability in practice.

The Sociology of Sustainability

Insofar as there is a sociology of sustainability that is solutions-oriented, it largely operates outside of or as an adjunct to the field of environmental sociology, at least in the United States. This field has many intertwined threads, including Hess’s (2007, 2009, 2012) *alternative pathways in science and technology* framework, the *grassroots innovation and sustainability transitions approach*, based on the work of Seyfang, Smith and their students and colleagues in England, and the *New Economics* approach primarily associated with Schor (2010, 2011) and Alperovitz (2006, 2011, 2013). In the paragraphs to follow, I compare and contrast these approaches and show how this research project extends them.

Hess’s most recent work examines connecting sustainability policy with economic development in the United States. He examines political power, particularly the

highly partisan state of affairs at the federal level, which has increasingly shut down opportunities for renewable energy industries to grow and develop infrastructure to challenge the supremacy of the fossil fuels industry. Hess connects this failure to act on issues related to climate change to party ideology and the industries and interests that represent and fund political parties and their campaign activities. Hess, et al. (2010) examine ways to circumvent the inability of the federal government to act in support of these moves to more renewable energy production by examining cases of innovations and best practices at the state and municipal levels. Indeed, following the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the state and municipal levels became the primary source for encouraging the development of renewable energy industries and infrastructure through both demand-side and supply-side policies. Through this research, Hess shows how social change and a transition to a more environmentally sustainable economy may be achieved. In his proposals, Hess relies on knowledge about what works for advocacy organizations such as Business Alliance for Local Living Economies as well as public benefit corporations such as the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency, who must answer to a sometimes fickle state legislature.

Schor (2010, 2011) has been working to develop an alternative economic system which leaves behind the growth imperative, which requires firms to seek increasing rates of growth in terms of profit and production, including using economic growth (mainly, GDP, which does not take into account the distribution of benefits and harms from increasing profits) as a measure of societal health and well-being. Part of Schor's program seeks to reduce work hours in order to reduce growth. According to Schor, fewer work hours, through a combination of public mandate, cultural shifts, and private

sector initiatives, would lead to increased employment overall. This, in tandem with increased access to sustainable consumption practices--such as through cooperative forms of production and consumption, dematerialization, and a do-it-yourself/together ethos—will enable a shift to a more sustainable future. Again, like Hess, Schor is developing strategies to create social change that rely on relationships with communities. In doing so, Schor is co-founder and co-chair of the board of the Center for a New American Dream, a national sustainability organization with a stated mission to “help Americans to reduce and shift their consumption to improve quality of life, protect the environment, and promote social justice” (Center for a New American Dream, n.d.).

Like Hess and Schor, Seyfang and Smith are interested in how sociotechnical systems are governed. Here, ‘sociotechnical’ refers to the embeddedness of technology in society, as opposed to the positivist view that science and technological advancement operate independent of social institutions. The field of possibilities and activities in which Seyfang and Smith are engaged they call ‘sustainability transitions.’ Sustainability transitions scholarship examines how grassroots innovations of sustainable practices are propagated. Such innovations are largely developed among civil society organizations and other voluntary associations or ‘outside’ mainstream of commercial technological development and research & development. Civil society, these writers argue, particularly because it lack a profit motive, provides a ‘protective space’ for these sustainable practices to be experimented with and further developed. Sustainability transitions scholars have adopted many aspects of regime theory, particularly by examining how these sustainable practices are expanded and how they can be taken up by the mainstream.

Research using this framework develops strategies to take a variety of sustainable practices to the mainstream. Some of the small, local level projects sustainability transitions scholars have sought to scale up include grassroots sustainable energy production (Hargraves 2011; Hielscher et al 2012; Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012; Hargraves et al. 2013; Seyfang et al. 2013), Earthships (Smith 2006; Seyfang 2009; Smith and Seyfang 2013), eco-housing (Smith 2007; Seyfang 2010), food localization (Seyfang 2006, 2007, 2008; Kirwin et al. 2013), organic food (Smith 2007), Transition Towns (Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012), and community currencies and time banks (Seyfang 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006). These projects are boiled down into four categories which are referred to as *niches*: energy production, housing, food, and money & exchange. These four areas are where sustainability transitions scholars concentrate on developing strategies to decrease energy consumption and communities' reliance on fossil fuels or Big Oil.

Each of these three traditions—alternative pathways, alternative economies and sustainability transitions—has influenced my work and is taken on in more depth at points throughout the dissertation. Most importantly, each of these three approaches points to developing practical strategies aimed at achieving a just and sustainable society. Additionally, all three approaches look to the local and regional level for alternative institutions and seek to connect these institutions to broader movements, governmental reforms, and market changes. Finally, each approach recognizes that government, the private sector, and civil society all have important roles to play in creating a just and sustainable transition. Moreover, they recognize the importance of hybrid organizations moving between these sectors.

What I seek to add to these approaches to the sociology of sustainability is an inclusive and grassroots perspective, highlighting the values and viewpoints of marginalized communities from Chicago. Both Schor's work on sustainable consumption and the work on sustainable transitions recognize that educated, white, middle class 'environmental types' overwhelmingly make up the groups of people engaging in practices or participating in institutions that these approaches promote. Indeed, the ability to do-it-yourself, often advocated by proponents of sustainable consumption, particularly the time commitment and having access to the tools, as well as having the flexibility to volunteer with civil society organizations developing grassroots innovations, requires a minimum amount of free time and resources generally associated with a middle class status.

While this potential barrier to participation is recognized by sociologists of sustainability, it tends to go unchallenged as it is assumed that the outcomes of sustainability are distributed equally or, if not, they eventually will be. Again, I see this assertion as something that is purported and not investigated. In this dissertation, I would like to highlight the multiple ways that marginalized communities are engaged in and experience urban sustainability initiatives. This includes organizations that do make such practices and institutions accessible at different levels. Therefore, I want to foreground an analysis of power and inequality at the local, grassroots level in terms of accessibility and the ability to influence local sustainable practices and institutions. Chicago offers a particularly rich site with which to explore these variations and power relations, because of the diversity of "green" organizations in the city, and its history of efforts to link and disconnect human and non-human biological systems.

Chicago and Urban Sustainability

In less than a century's time, Chicago went from a military outpost set amongst marshes of wild onions to the epicenter of industrialization in the early part of the 20th century. According to Cronin (1991), largely through the development of commodities (i.e., grain, lumber, and meat) Chicago became a conduit connecting rural and urban, people and nature, and the East and West. The commodity markets of Chicago stripped natural resources of their ecological identities and turned them into capital. In an even shorter period of time, Chicago was redefined as the capital of the Rust Belt, or the industrial decline that led to poverty and urban collapse, which was spurred by global economic restructuring. In Chicago, this was manifested in part through the rapid decline in Chicago's manufacturing sector. This deindustrialization, beginning in the early 1980s, would usher in unprecedented forms of inequality and social dislocation, combining enduring racial inequalities with greater economic inequality, particularly because of the loss of middle class manufacturing jobs. Postindustrial growth, based on the service- and knowledge economy, saw unstable and punctuated job growth in both high-income technological, financial, and consulting jobs and low-wage service industry work. Chicago's postindustrial 'recovery' has had a distinct spatial aspect to it as well: black neighborhoods that had come to be built around the now almost collapsed steel industry on the south side of the city and the declining manufacturing industry on the west side of the city have become increasingly socially and economically isolated. The city's economic growth has tended to benefit businesses and the mostly white residents of the Loop, the north shore of the city, and the suburbs (Doussard et al. 2009). Indeed, black workers from Chicago's south side were some of the hardest hit when it came to

the impact of deindustrialization, namely a waning number of working opportunities, deteriorating wages, and declining working conditions (Wilson 1987).

Postindustrial growth was accompanied by the decline of labor union participation and labor bargaining power. This contributed to the continued decline of wages and a labor market restructuring based on low-wage and contingent labor. This was perpetuated by the conservative political shift in the 1980s, in which economic growth was increasingly based on lowered costs of labor. To carry out this economic agenda, the Reagan administration and Republican Congresses sought to gut many of the Keynesian policies that they had inherited. One policy in particular that was done away with was the Comprehensive Employment and Training Administration of 1973 (CETA), which had created government jobs at the municipal levels when the labor market ebbed. This was replaced, in 1982, with the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Instead of creating jobs for people, JTPA sought to provide skills training for unemployed workers, thereby helping to lower the cost of labor by creating a trained labor force in waiting—often for jobs that never appeared. JTPA had many detrimental effects on urban communities; it was designed to disempower and circumvent community-based organizations and unions by giving the power to organize job training to local business councils and by only funding job training for the poor and not the existing working class (Lafer 2002).

JTPA can be seen as one small piece in a larger puzzle of the developing neoliberal state, which also includes the criminalization of poverty, according to Wacquant (2001). In tandem with the shift from welfare to “workfare,” which required recipients of public aid to participate in skills training or unpaid and low-wage work in order to be eligible for benefits, there is also a growing penal state to deal with the social

dislocation caused by deindustrialization. From 1970 to 2001, Illinois experienced a 500 percent increase in its prison population. Along with harsher sentences ('truth in sentencing'), more people were sentenced to prison due to dramatic increases in the policing and the violation of harsh street drug laws (La Vigne et al. 2003: 1).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, urban communities which had provided the fodder for the penal state and the prison industry were beginning to experience an unprecedented occurrence: the return home from prison of significant numbers of men. In 2001, over 30,000 men and women were released from prison and returned home to their communities in Illinois. Over half of these people returned home to Chicago, and over a third of this group were concentrated in the 6 most socially and economically disadvantaged communities in Chicago: Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park (La Vigne et al. 2003:2). With increased difficulty finding employment and housing, disconnection from family and community, and an increased likelihood of health problems, in particular substance abuse, it became apparent to politicians such as Mayor of Chicago Richard M. Daley (1989-2011) that, on the one hand, continued cycles of incarceration would delegitimize the penal state by making it appear, at best, ineffective in rehabilitation of the incarcerated and, on the other hand, the actual communities that were experiencing significant levels of reintegration of the formerly imprisoned wanted to find a way to help.

One of the methods of helping ease the burden of reintegration became the transitional jobs training program (Bloom et al. 2009; Bloom 2010; Redcross et al. 2010). The institutionalization of transitional jobs training can be seen as a combination of

workfare and the penal state, because they are skills training programs for the formerly incarcerated, which is often communicated by workforce development agencies such as the Chicago Jobs Council by using the more cryptic and obfuscating phrase ‘people with barriers to entry into the workforce.’ Besides the intended ‘object’ of such programs, what differentiates traditional from transitional jobs training programs is typically a more encompassing continuum of services, including but not limited to therapeutic care and significant assistance with finding stable housing, reliable transportation, and access to adequate health care (The United States Conference of Mayors 2009). Indeed, the perceived and manufactured need for such programs prompted many state departments of corrections, Illinois included, to act as granting agencies, however short-lived, to fund such programs through social service agencies, religious organizations, and community based groups.

In the 2000s, jobs training programs were first being connected to improving the urban environment, institutionalized and initiated by programs conducted by the Ella Baker Center in Oakland, California. This model was further developed and popularized by Van Jones (2008), who advocated for at-risk youth and poor people of color with barriers to entry to the traditional workforce be trained in the ‘green collar economy.’ To Jones, a civil rights activist and environmental advocate, who later served in the Obama administration as a “green jobs czar,” this served a dual purpose of helping society transition to a post-carbon economy and to ensure that poor people and people of color, who are usually left out of the benefits of economic changes, get to take advantage of a “level playing field” or “get in on the ground floor” of what Jones saw as the burgeoning green energy economy (Jones 2008).

Preceding this connection between job training and the environment were a series of urban environmental changes that were in addition to the urban economic changes discussed above. First, deindustrialization and the urban environmental justice movement were successful in significantly reducing threats of point source pollution. Clearly, these threats have not been completely eradicated; however, they have been significantly reduced, along with other LULUs. In 2012, Cook County, Illinois banned the operation of landfills within Cook County. This law was somewhat redundant, because the City of Chicago had already placed a moratorium on landfill operations in 2005. In 2012, Midwest Generation was forced to close two of its coal-burning power plants due to a combination of increased regulation, which would have required costly upgrades, as well as public pressure from within the communities in which they operated, largely organized by the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO). While these were some of the last major campaigns, there are still efforts underway by the environmental justice movement in Chicago. For example, the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF), one of the most influential environmental justice organizations in Chicago, is battling the new threat of *petcoke* being stored and blown into their community from a storage facility across the Illinois-Indiana border. On April 30 2014, the Chicago City Council passed a petcoke ordinance proposed by the Mayor Rahm Emanuel administration that banned the creation of new petcoke storage terminals and gave storage facilities two years to cover their petcoke piles (Hawthorne 2014).

Importantly, in tandem with continued environmental justice vigilance, many environmental justice organizations have diversified their toolkits to include sustainable community and economic development efforts, often cleaning up abandoned industrial

sites and helping convert them into more sustainable and green industries. Even though point source pollution had been significantly reduced, many communities were left with decaying industrial buildings and polluted land, or brownfields. In the late 2000s, many of these organizations, including SETF, LVEJO, Claretian Associates, and the Chicago Center for Urban Transformation, all began to work with foundations and city agencies on community and economic development efforts.

One of the ways that this was undertaken was through the extension of the previously largely middle class “urban agriculture” movement. That movement had emerged in part as a solution to a lack of jobs, but especially, due to the availability of expanses of vacant, albeit polluted, land in cities. This movement, which took form in the 1990s, stemmed from the growing critique of the energy intensity of industrial agriculture, combined with growing urban food insecurity and food injustice. No longer were cities viewed only as sites of consumption or the factories that processed industrial food stuffs but as places where food could be produced for immediate consumption, or for sale in local or regional markets.

Under Former Mayor Richard M. Daley, Chicago was an early practitioner of the idea of propelling economic development by attracting professionals and members of the ‘creative class’ by tackling quality of life issues, particularly around green space and environmental health. Much of this was motivated by his spouse, Maggie Daley, who was a committed gardener, conservationist, and a major proponent of neighborhood beautification through city-wide programs to plant trees and install flower planters. Under the Daley administration, a new Department of the Environment was created to take on these challenges. According to long-time staff, the Department of the Environment was

able to carry out a wide variety of activities as long as it could be argued that they contributed to economic development or job creation. In time, such policies and programs came to include retrofitting all public buildings and ensuring all new public construction would be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified in terms of energy efficiency, accelerated permitting programs for green building construction, green industrial corridors and accompanying tax incentives, and, ultimately, a Climate Action Plan that laid out a strategy to alter programs, services, and infrastructure in the city in anticipation of coming climate uncertainty (Chicago Climate Action Plan, n.d.). Other programs included the Chicago Center for Green Technology, which provides shared office space and facilities to green businesses, and hosts a green building resource center for contractors and home remodelers, and the Chicago Conservation Corps, which trains volunteers to develop neighborhood-level projects throughout the city.

However, by the early 2000s the city's green jobs training program, Greencorps Chicago, became the flagship program of the Department of the Environment. At that time, Greencorps was training approximately 40 people per year, mostly black men who had previously been incarcerated. Part of this training included helping community groups and 'block clubs' start community gardens on vacant properties throughout Chicago's neighborhoods. Another part of training included working with the Chicago Parks District and the Cook County Forest Preserve to maintain parks and trails around the city.

In many ways, Chicago was at the forefront of urban sustainability. This was largely due to necessity in terms of deindustrialization, the remaining pollution, and the accompanying poverty, as well as the new economy, in terms of attracting young, middle

class workers for the technology economy who were said to be attracted to a variety of cultural and environmental amenities that only urban areas could provide. In this sense, the City of Chicago did many innovative things for a municipality, and provided room and support for grassroots sustainability initiatives as well. In the following section, I provide background information on the three cases I explore, emphasizing their origins and their relationships to the City of Chicago. The three organizations are the Chicago Honey Co-op, Greencorps Chicago, and Growing Power, Inc.

Research Sites

Besides issues of access and timing, I chose these three research sites first, because each site represents a different organizational structure, although each is a hybrid organizational form, mixing aspects of private and public control and for-profit and not-for-profit. Such hybrid organizations are increasingly looked to by practitioners as a solution to the multiple goals of inclusive economic and community development. For example, the Chicago Honey Co-op is as a *social enterprise*. Generally, social enterprises are known to leverage commercial strategies to make improvements in human and environmental health and well-being. Social enterprises can be for-profit and not-for-profit, and typically take on a multiplicity of functions. While the Chicago Honey Co-op is a for-profit social enterprise, Growing Power, Inc. is an enterprising non-profit. This means that Growing Power seeks to use the market—the sales of goods and services—to pay for their programs, including job opportunities that pay a living wage. While they have only recently achieved funding 50 percent of their operation through their sales revenue, they appear to be expanding steadily. Unlike the Chicago Honey Co-op, Growing Power has access to, and has been highly successful in obtaining, foundation

funding. Their structure also allows them to acquire government contracts intended for social service agencies and organizations. Fulfilling contracts to provide social services is another important revenue stream for Growing Power.

And finally, Greencorps Chicago is a public-private partnership, in which the City of Chicago contracts with a for-profit environmental services and consulting firm and a handful of non-profit organizations to provide a jobs training program. Besides job training for participants, Greencorps does significant work building community gardens and maintaining and improving public spaces throughout the city of Chicago including landscapes maintenance and beautification. In doing so, they benefit the public, non-profit organizations, such as community gardens, as well as other government agencies through intergovernmental agreements (IGAs), such as with the Chicago Parks District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

The second reason for choosing each of these research sites is that each program is well-established and enjoys some degree of local and national renown. The Chicago Honey Co-op is promoted by the Chicago local foods movement, especially the organization Slow Food Chicago, as an exemplary local, urban food enterprise which makes a 'delicious' product and is purportedly bringing much needed economic activity to a 'downtrodden' area of the city. The manager of the Chicago Honey Co-op was, for example, selected to represent Chicago at the biennial international Slow Food gathering, Terra Madre, in Turino, Italy in 2008 (Osmund 2012). The Chicago Honey Co-op has also garnered significant media attention: they are frequently featured in mass media, from mainstream news outlets, like Chicago's ABC7, to local publications touting local

and sustainable foods, such as the Local Beet, to weekly queries from local journalism students at Northwestern University in their online publication Medill Reports.

Greencorps Chicago enjoys local and national recognition. Despite having changed significantly since the program's inception, the program's long tenure makes it recognized by many environmentalists and urban sustainable development advocates as the first green jobs training program in the United States. As an entrenched Chicago institution, balancing the needs of multiple actors and organizations, it is often looked to by program and curriculum developers and program evaluators around the country for innovations and 'best practices,' particularly in terms of being inclusive of underserved groups of people as well as in terms of coordinating with potential employers in both the public and private sectors. Indeed, Van Jones looked to Greencorps when developing Green For All in Oakland, California, which has since become a national-level advocate for helping people of color take part in and take advantage of the burgeoning green economy through jobs training and business development (Jones 2008). Locally, Greencorps is revered by community gardeners, many local non-profits that have programming related to urban green space or agriculture, and locally owned businesses looking to help their community by hiring people with felonies on their record (as well as taking advantage of any tax breaks by doing so).

Yet, Growing Power's programs and accomplishments have also proven to be contentious at the local, grassroots level, in part due to the attention and resources Growing Power attracts, which some sustainability activists and urban agriculture advocates perceive to being detrimental to other local projects, organizations, and coalitions. Still, it has also garnered acclaim from many sectors, including government

officials such as Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, and First Lady Michelle Obama, major corporations such as Kohl's and Sysco, and national sustainability advocacy organizations such as the Post Carbon Institute and the Women's Environmental Institute. Through their annual National/International Urban & Small Farmers Conference and their Regional Outreach Training Centers, Growing Power, Inc. has spread their unique model of economic development based around the creation of inclusive community food systems throughout the United States at the grassroots level (Growing Power, n.d.).

Much like the Chicago Honey Co-op, Growing Power, Inc. garners significant media attention. Will Allen and Erika Allen, the founder and director of Growing Power, Inc., respectively, frequently travel the country speaking at universities and delivering keynote addresses at national and international conferences. Television crews from a variety of shows based throughout North America, including shows on local public television stations and Free Speech TV, consistently document the goings-on at Growing Power's headquarters in Milwaukee and Chicago.

Finally, I chose these three organizations because they are in the same geographic region. By examining Chicago-based organizations, I control for factors related to geographic difference, including but not limited to climate, government, population, and organizational landscape. Each organization serves different constituencies, although as each organization serves multiple constituencies, they do overlap. Therefore, all three have some connection to and interaction with the other two. How they interact and respond to one another also provides important data about each organization's—or at least the leadership of each organization—values and priorities. In this regard, for each

organization it is essential to keep the others at arm's reach, usually to shield from criticism or to ensure that they receive the appropriate recognition as in the case of some of the staff of Greencorps' perceived competition for Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's attention with Growing Power.

Chicago Honey Co-op

The first research site, the Chicago Honey Co-op (CHC), was started on the west side of Chicago in 2003. The farm was located in an economically depressed and overwhelmingly black neighborhood of North Lawndale. I describe the CHC as a social enterprise because it is not technically a non-profit organization. Indeed, it is a multi-faceted organization, with many charges. It is part firm, part voluntary organization, and part non-profit charitable organization. Because of this form, it has links to many organizations and constituencies, including social movement organizations, community organizations, social service providers, other small businesses and artisanal enterprises, as well as consumers of high-grade, local honey and related value-added products.

The CHC is a charitable organization because of its original goal to provide job training to the unemployed people—mostly people with a felony on their record—from North Lawndale. In 2013, long after my time observing, a branch of the CHC was finally incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization, which conducts environmental education programming particularly with regard to bees and the reduced number of pollinators throughout the world. Their major audience is primary school students in Chicago. This mission grew out of the organization's other environmental activities, in which they promoted and practiced sustainable food production and brownfield remediation. In terms of promoting these practices, the CHC found most of its audience via the local foods

movement, particularly Slow Food Chicago and Advocates for Urban Agriculture, a coalition organization seeking to expand sustainable agricultural production in the Chicago area.

During my tenure in the field, the CHC hosted a small community garden within its boundaries. Plots were mainly allocated to the largely middle-class membership of an allied neighborhood organization, the North Lawndale Greening Committee, a few of whose members sit on the board of directors of CHC. This is connected to another important feature of the organization, which was that it also functioned as a small business incubator by providing production space and some manual labor assistance to a few aspiring artisans and entrepreneurs, some of whom used the garden plots and some of whom were actually employees of the organization. And finally, the CHC created revenue as a retail business by producing value-added goods that it sold for profit. These goods are sold online through the CHC's web site, at a variety of boutique grocery stores, to restaurants, and at many farmers markets throughout the city.

One of the main factors that allowed for the organization to be multifaceted was that much of it functioned in an informal manner. Besides the educational foundation which was incorporated in 2013, the CHC actively made the decision to not seek non-profit status, partly because of the rigidity of recordkeeping and reporting requirements, according to the farm manager. Such expectations were understood to be an impediment to their goal of keeping the organization small, since record-keeping would require extra time and therefore extra staff and more revenue. The hybrid organizational form allows for entrepreneurs running the CHC to acquire resources from various constituent groups,

often as donations, in order to operate the organization and to adequately pay themselves, which was central to the organization's reproduction.

However, this informal organization also enables an extractive relationship between the CHC and the neighborhood that it was located in. The CHC garners much positive press and free marketing via Slow Food Chicago, donations from sustainable food advocates, and sales due to the neighborhood it is located in: a largely poor, black neighborhood. Furthermore, the organization has taken advantage of its brief role as a jobs training program. Even after the first and only season of the jobs training program, the board members and employees of the organization continued depict the CHC as a jobs training program. This was partly due to the fact that some of the staff considered themselves an informal jobs training program in terms of the training provided to volunteers. Yet, the economic benefits that it brought to the neighborhood—and residents—on which it built its reputation were minimal.

This relationship between the community and resource extraction is further obfuscated by the ideology of localism and localist development as played out through the local foods movement. The CHC has been a focal point of the local Slow Food chapter and has been identified by past presidents of the organization as “representing everything we stand for,” specifically the production of high quality, healthy food and the just remuneration of those who produce it. Indeed, as much of the mission of Slow Food is marketing—or educating consumers about local food traditions and enterprises—the CHC received much attention and acclaim, which generated donations and sales. However, residents of the neighborhood in which the CHC is located receive few of the

economic, social, and environmental benefits produced by the CHC. I describe this as ‘extractive localism’ and examine this phenomenon in more detail in chapter two.

Greencorps Chicago

The second research site, Greencorps Chicago, is a public-private partnership between the City of Chicago, multiple non-profit agencies, and a for-profit environmental services and consulting firm that is contracted to administer the program and act as the hiring authority for most of the staff. A program of the City of Chicago’s Department of Environment (transferred to the Department of Transportation in 2012), Greencorps’ contracted partners include: the Safer Foundation, which provides social services to people returning to their communities in Chicago after serving time in jail or prison; OAI, Inc. (‘opportunity, advancement, and innovation’), a non-profit workforce development agency whose primary source of revenue is government contracts at all levels of government (i.e., federal, state, and local), and WRD Environmental, a for-profit environmental services firm whose primary source of revenue is contracts with municipalities and their delegate agencies. Secondary and tertiary contractors include the Chicago Parks District, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and Signature Staff, Inc., a firm specializing in payroll and accounting.

Greencorps began in 1992 as a pilot program of the City of Chicago Department of the Environment. In the beginning, its primary function was to help build and maintain community gardens and other gardens on public property. Initially, it only operated during summers and was mostly staffed with college-bound interns. As the program expanded and became more established, Greencorps began to specialize in jobs training. Only within the last 10 years has the program shifted to become a transitional jobs

training program, seeking to provide those who are legally restricted from the workforce gain so-called employable skills and experience and expand their social networks. No longer are participants college students on summer break; now participants are primarily thirty-something black males who have committed non-violent felonies and have spent extended periods of time in prison.

Greencorps participants work four days per week for a total of 32 hours and earn approximately minimum wage (\$8.25 per hour). While getting experience ‘in the field,’ at outdoor work sites typically doing landscaping work, they receive many other types of training and education. Other types of training and education include ‘professional development’ seminars that teach so-called ‘soft skills’ (i.e., how to interact with coworkers and be properly deferential to bosses and customers) and classes including basic mathematics, tool use and safety, and entrepreneurship skills. Furthermore, each participant has the opportunity to earn a variety of certificates and licensure, many ‘industry-standard,’ in areas such as forklift operation, hazardous material handling and remediation, integrated pest management, horticulture and plant identification, tree care, ecological restoration, building engineering and maintenance, lead abatement, road construction flagging, electronics recycling, Microsoft Office proficiency, General Education Development testing, and commercial driving licensure.

Many Greencorps participants are introduced to a different way of thinking about urban nature and space, since many of the neighborhoods that they live in lack green spaces, particularly ones that are ‘productive’ of goods and services. Or they may have a park, but the park is too dangerous to enjoy. In fact, among the environmental benefits that many participants told me they valued was freedom of geographic mobility, as well

as the cultural knowledge that they gained from such mobility. The latter knowledge allowed them access to communities outside their own. But they also gained a particular kind of environmental knowledge. A common refrain from many trainees, for example, was that they never thought about there being different types of trees before. Similarly, many participants recognized the benefits of native plantings—which they previously thought were simply weeds—despite the fact that they did not want to plant them in their own neighborhood or at their own home because they thought they were ugly. In this way, they may have embraced a white, middle class view of nature as pastoral or undomesticated, but not without adapting it to their own preferences.

During my time as a participant observer at Greencorps, the organization experienced a high level of uncertainty with regards to the future status of the program. This largely stemmed from the election of now Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Using the budget shortfall as his reasoning, one of Mayor Emanuel's first moves upon his taking office in 2011 was to dissolve the Department of the Environment. This included discontinuing some programs and finding new homes for others. These new homes sometimes included other city departments and agencies; however, many programs were passed off to the private sector partner organizations that had had a role in developing them with the Department of the Environment. For example, the Chicago Conservation Corps became a project of the Peggy Notabaert Nature Museum, while the Chicago Climate Action Plan was taken over by a coalition of organizations including Chicago Wilderness, a regional conservation and restoration organization, and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning which is a regional planning organization given a legislative mandate to develop a regional planning strategy for the 7 counties in the Chicago region.

Greencorps and the Chicago Center for Green Technology, however, found a new home in the Department of Transportation. Because of Greencorps' limited work on transportation issues in Chicago, Greencorps administrators and staff were concerned about what would eventually become of the program. During my time there, they were transitioning to the Department of Transportation and getting to know the department's new leadership. During this same time, the significant stimulus funding that Greencorps had received via Community Block Grant Development-Recovery funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009) was about to run out. This funding was what allowed for the organization to expand to 60 participants that year. Without this money, the program was expected to shrink back to 2010 numbers and size, and with some new foci contributing to the Department of Transportation's mission. Staff and participants anticipated the worst: that the program would continue on for a year at a reduced capacity, due mostly to momentum, and then be terminated because it would not be a good fit in the Department of Transportation. During this time, staff and participants were eager to defend and promote the program because they valued the large role that city agencies played in environmental efforts under Daley.

Growing Power, Inc.

Growing Power, Inc. is a non-profit organization with the mission of increasing access to healthy, high-quality, affordable foods for all communities. Growing Power's method of doing this is developing community food systems by providing "hands-on training, on-the-ground demonstration, outreach and technical assistance... that help people grow, process, market and distribute food in a sustainable manner" (Growing Power, n.d.). The organization advocates principles of food justice, particularly by

drawing attention to, and developing strategies to combat, racial disparities with respect to access to safe, healthy, and culturally-appropriate food. Growing Power uses food as a point of entry into addressing large issues of racial inequality, as they work to develop economic solutions.

The roots of Growing Power extend back to 1993. In that year, founder Will Allen purchased a small roadside stand and greenhouses on a two-acre lot on the northwest side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The property happened to be less than a half-mile from the largest public housing projects in the state of Wisconsin. Allen had difficulty making money and paying the bills operating the greenhouses and roadside stand as a business. Within a few years, a local YWCA youth group approached Allen seeking assistance in starting their own organic market garden. Through this experience, the attention it attracted and the inquiries he received from other school groups and non-profits, Allen started the first iteration of Growing Power as a way to diversify his revenue stream, by charging schools and social service agencies for educational programming in horticulture. From here, Growing Power took off, and Allen and his staff began experimenting with different urban agriculture techniques. By 2000, increased demand for Growing Power's goods and services had transformed the roadside stand into a 'community food center' offering high quality, low-cost produce to neighborhood residents.

In 2002, Will Allen's daughter Erika started a branch of Growing Power, Inc. in Chicago. Growing Power Chicago would take over some projects that Allen, Sr. had spearheaded for other organizations and agencies, including the Chicago Lights Urban Farm part of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago and the Grant Park "Art in the Farm" potager garden. Currently, other Growing Power farm and garden locations in

Chicago include Altgeld Gardens, Jackson Park, and Roosevelt Square. In 2010, Growing Power Chicago opened its new headquarters, the Iron Street Farm, on a seven-acre former industrial site located on the south branch of the Chicago River adjacent to the Bridgeport and McKinley Park community areas.

Most of Growing Power Chicago's efforts are in youth employment and training. In 2012, the group's Chicago Youth Corps program employed 350 youth through the public-private partnership After School Matters program (Growing Power, n.d.), the largest youth development and youth employment program in Chicago, largely administered and funded through the city's Department of Family and Support Services. Other programs include trainings and workshops for educators, beginning gardeners, and people who want to start market gardens, anti-racism workshops, programs to create new farmer's markets on the West Side of Chicago, and providing technical garden assistance to tens of other community organizations and non-profits throughout the city (Growing Power, n.d.).

In Chicago, Growing Power's influence is palpable. Erika Allen has been the co-chair of the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC) since its inception in 2005 (incorporated as a 501(c)3 in 2011) which worked closely with the Mayor's office in order to develop a composting ordinance that would allow Growing Power, and presumably other organizations, to compost mass quantities of organic material. This generated some conflict with another major coalition looking to develop policies to support small entrepreneurs through Advocates for Urban Agriculture (AUA). Much of this conflict was over the scale of legal operations, which fit the size of an organization

like Growing Power, but required too much capital for many small start-ups, farmers, and food businesses represented by AUA, including the Chicago Honey Co-op.

Strong support for Growing Power from Mayor Emanuel and his office began early in his tenure. As Mayor-elect, Emanuel appointed Allen to his transition team on the Energy, Environment and Public Space Committee. Allen, unlike many political and environmental activists in Chicago, has publicly praised the Emanuel administration for providing opportunities and platforms for new organizations and new leaders, and criticized the Daley administration for ‘playing favorites’ particularly through the Department of the Environment. (E. Allen, 2013). Yet, staff and allies of Greencorps were critical of Allen for not supporting the Department of Environment when she was on Emanuel’s transition team.

Following her work on his transition team, Emanuel appointed Allen a Commissioner of the Chicago Park District in 2012. Through her work with the Park District, Allen has been exploring issues of alternative and long-term land tenure and developing programs to open up public park space to more farming. In 2012, Emanuel announced the launch of the Farmers for Chicago program, which is opening up unused and neglected space owned by the Park District to beginning urban farmers and urban agriculture organizations to lease for the long-term at cheap rates. Included in this program is training and assistance in gaining access to markets.

These organizations and the political and economic context of the city of Chicago are the key sites through which I examine how low income people experience environments and sustainability in contemporary hybrid forms of urban environmental organizations.

Research Strategy

In order to answer my research questions, I use multiple methods to gather data and analyze the experiences of participants in urban sustainability. These include ethnography, in-depth interviews, and archival research and document analysis. I employed ethnographic observation at all three of the organizations. This included varying degrees of participation via volunteer work: at the Chicago Honey Co-op, I worked on a garden project clearing the lot, building garden beds with soil that was shipped in, and harvesting black eyed peas and sweet potatoes as well as at their main farm site spreading a large delivery of manure to help it breakdown before it was put on the plots; at Greencorps Chicago I worked alongside the job trainees usually performing menial tasks like garbage pickup so as not to take away their opportunities for skill development; at Growing Power, Inc., I spent hours sifting vermicompost, unpacking spoiled fruits and vegetables from major distributors of organic foods and building compost berms; and planting and harvesting peas, tomatoes, herbs, and kale. At all sites, I worked alongside employees of the organization as well as other volunteers (except for Greencorps). I often took the least popular jobs, and the jobs that had the least possibility of skill development.

Issues of access halted data collection in some cases, particularly with regards to Growing Power, Inc. As an organization led by people of color, Growing Power staff were keenly aware of the history of academic research on poor people of color and that such research rarely benefitted its subjects. Moreover, Growing Power staff were not interested in devoting time and resources to accommodating researchers unless they volunteered. At Growing Power, I volunteered two days a week for three hours each day

for an entire season, from March to October. Through my commitment, and after a long period of time, I was able to build trust with the staff and sit down to discuss my research. I eventually negotiated a letter of institutional cooperation in order to conduct ethnographic research and interviews with staff. However, the letter was missing important information necessary for my institution's Human Subject Review Board. This happened late enough in my data collection that I decided not to pursue it. Instead, I used my experience to shape my research, but I never collected ethnographic or interview data from Growing Power. Instead, I looked to publicly available texts including the organization's web site and publications, public presentations and events, the autobiography of the founder and executive director, and digital and print media coverage, and I use my experience in "non-access" to comment on the reasons for Growing Power's success.

My relationship with the Chicago Honey Co-op was largely facilitated through my participation in Slow Food Chicago and my research on Chicago's wider local foods movement and how participants understood "local." Slow Food Chicago is a local chapter of the international Slow Food movement that promotes sustainable and fairly-produced food. In Chicago, it tends to be the main organization for middle-class 'foodies' looking to support local, sustainable food by indulging in fine dining and frequenting the elite artisanal farmers markets such as the Green City Market. I spent over a year participating in and observing Slow Food Chicago. The Chicago Honey Co-op was not a focal point of my initial data collection, and only through an assignment in a graduate course on Space & Place did it become relevant to my research via a joint garden project

they did with Slow Food Chicago. In the case of the Honey co-op I supplemented ethnographic evidence supplemented with digital and print media coverage.

Finally, the most formal example of participant observation, including extensive and systematic note-taking and being embedded within the organization on a daily basis, occurred with Greencorps Chicago. I negotiated institutional cooperation soon after making contact with staff and access to the organization came through the program director, program manager, and the assistant commissioner of the Department of Environment. Staff were generally supportive of the research and interested in the possibility that the answers to my research questions could improve the program. Since that time, I have spoken at length with both the Program Director and Program Manager about my findings. In the case of Greencorps Chicago, the ethnographic evidence that I collected via my participant observation supplemented the evidence I collected from formal, in-depth interviews. I heard the stories of many Greencorps participants and, to the best of my ability, tried to see the world through their eyes.

While the variety of methods of data collection make it difficult to make direct comparisons between the subjects, or participants, of such programs, my methods have allowed me to develop a comprehensive understanding of each organization. In this way, my research examines organizations and what they do, in addition to understanding the views of participants. Indeed, using the same method of data collection for each organization would have likely limited my data and, therefore, my analysis. This is partly due to the different organizational structures, missions, subjects, constituencies, and leadership.

Each organization had different protocols regarding the involvement and participation of a researcher as a result of their differing organizational structures. The Chicago Honey Co-op's organizational structure was very informal and such decisions were largely made on a whim by the manager. With regard to Growing Power, decisions were similarly made by the Director; however, access to the Director was difficult to achieve and had to be acquired via her staff. Furthermore, the Director's availability in this case was limited due to her work load and travel. What I found was that researchers who were not working with Growing Power on a policy project through the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council were not a priority and typically would not have emails and phone calls returned. For Greencorps, there was an established protocol because it was a program of the City of Chicago. This protocol was well-tread, thanks to heavy involvement by other researchers, who were usually conducting program evaluation research. Therefore, staff—and even participants, to a great extent—were familiar with academic research, comfortable being observed by researchers, and often willing to explain what they were doing or invite me to observe a specific activity.

Each organization also serves different groups of people. In the case of the Chicago Honey Co-op, the people benefitting from the purported jobs training program were no longer present and the mission of the organization had been altered. Greencorps, on the other hand, was an active and noted job training program, assisting people legally restricted from participating in the workforce (i.e., having a felony on their record). Growing Power primarily provided youth development programs. Typically, youth development helps youth gain skills to compete on the job market, or job-readiness training. Growing Power's version of youth development is very different, even holistic,

as they seek to empower youth through paid work, informal education, recreation, mentorship and leadership development, and creative labor (such as mural painting and landscape and garden design) and manual farm labor. While I was not involved with the youth programming of Growing Power, I did spend significant amounts of time working alongside and socializing with staff members who had participated in Growing Power's programs as youth and were now full-time staff, managing of various aspects of the farming operations, including me and other volunteers. Again, because I did not have formal permission from the organization to use these experiences and observations in my research, they are not directly reported here, but are likely to shape my perceptions of the other materials that I rely on more heavily in my analysis.

Finally, the leadership of each organization, as the gateway for researcher access, had differing perspectives on the involvement of academic researchers. The manager of the Chicago Honey Co-op and board members of Slow Food were all highly-educated professionals and small business owners. Many regularly socialized with academics, including the director of the Jane Addams Hull House and Fine Arts faculty at the University of Illinois-Chicago, as well as a variety of graduate and undergraduate students from universities throughout the Chicago area. In this way, they were generally supportive of research efforts and readily provided access to researchers or faithfully answered the queries of students, according to my experience and the other students I met participating in or researching Slow Food Chicago. For example, the former president of the Chicago chapter responded to my initial email query within a day's time and invited me to sit down with him before the board meeting two days later. At this meeting, he gave me a private PowerPoint presentation, albeit one he had done before, about what

Slow Food Chicago does and the status of its many projects. Moreover, when I needed to interview three members of the organization for a class project, he replied to my email copying three members he thought I should interview and immediately introducing us via email, essentially volunteering them to be interviewed.

Similarly, Greencorps Chicago staff was filled with people with advanced degrees, generally in a natural science. One exception was the Program Director who had a Master of Arts degree in sociology. She was interested in the answers to the questions that I was pursuing through my research. She was very accommodating, arranging a meeting with me within a week of our first contact. Most of our initial meeting took place during an extensive tour of the Greencorps offices and facilities at the Chicago Center for Green Technology. Having a master's degree in the social sciences, she was welcoming of social science researchers and excited to talk with a researcher, other than a program evaluator, who she saw as sharing her commitment to social justice.

Growing Power Chicago's relationship with academics and researchers is largely limited to individuals and research centers who are involved in the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council, which is administered by Growing Power and co-chaired by Growing Power Chicago's director, Erika Allen. The most notable people with whom Growing Power works with include a professor of geography at Chicago State University who is involved in urban agriculture policy at the municipal level, and academics and public health professionals that work with the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC). Beyond that, Growing Power has limited and strategic engagement with researchers and universities. This means that they typically only cooperate on their terms. Often this means that the research institution or organization brings significant

resources to help solve a problem that Growing Power is facing. An example of this is Growing Power's relationship with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of the Fresh Water Sciences, which is helping Growing Power build and 'scale-up' their hydroponic and aquaponic systems.

In Erika Allen's public talks, she often voices skepticism regarding academic research, citing both her own experience within the 'privileged institutions of higher education,' such as her time as a Bachelor of Fine Arts student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as the failure of researchers to provide any reciprocity. Indeed, in my experience, email queries regarding my research went unanswered, and it was only after three months of steady volunteer work that the staff member supervising volunteers agreed to speak with Allen about my research project. Even then, the staff member had many questions about how I envisioned using this research and how I planned to make my findings public. Approximately one month after my discussion with the staff member, I was asked to speak with Allen about my research proposal. Allen proceeded to ask many of the same questions regarding the relevance of the research and what I wanted to do with it. From there, I shared my interview script and drafts of letters institutional cooperation. After another three months to Growing Power agreed and signed. However, what was signed was one of the early drafts of the agreement with the corresponding date. I decided not to follow up to alter the agreement due to my timeframe and, instead, I altered my data collection as well as my research question.

Summary of Chapters

In the following chapters, I examine how different Chicago-based sustainability organization engage poor people of color and attempt to make them the subjects or

objects of their mission and programming. In doing so, I look at what each organization purports to be the benefits of sustainability, in general, for poor people of color, and how poor people of color benefit from each organizations specific activities, in particular. In the cases of Greencorps Chicago and Growing Power, Inc., as a people of color-led organization, I am able to get data specifically on how participants in the program envision these benefits, both agreeing and disagreeing with the respective organization.

In the next chapter, I tell the story of the Chicago Honey Co-op, a social enterprise, run by white staff yet located in a poor black neighborhood. Access to the environmental and social benefits it produces varies, however, the economic benefits are largely garnered by the farm manager. What obfuscates this fact is the ideology and practice of localism promoted by the mostly white local foods movement, specifically Slow Food Chicago. Indeed, much of the veneration directed at the CHC are generated by its location in a poor black neighborhood and its fleeting jobs training program intended for men and women returning to the neighborhood from prison. This has also been central to the market of the product as well as the solicitation of donations, thereby funneling much of the money and goodwill intended for the neighborhood. In this urban agriculture and sustainability initiative, poor people of color are the objects of the sustainability practices expected to benefit from the mere presence of the CHC, if not participating in it.

In chapter three, I turn my attention to one of the first and largest green jobs training programs in the United States. As a transitional jobs training program, Greencorps Chicago seeks to help people with ‘barriers to entry into the workforce’ ‘get in on the ground floor’ of the green economy. The way that the program is structured as a

public-private partnership, including the central role of the SAFER Foundation ensures that mostly young black males with felony records are the objects of the program.

However, through the data I collected using in-depth interviews, I show how participants in this program come to understand the largely white world of sustainability, yet adopt and adapt the things they learn to in order to overcome their social and geographic isolation, find work, and shape how the program approaches sustainability through projects and impact where these projects take place throughout the city.

In chapter four, I use the sustainability transitions literature to look examine Growing Power, Inc. I find that despite the intentions of sustainability transitions and the use of strategic niche management, this conceptual framework fails to capture the success of Growing Power, Inc. This is primarily seen in terms of the sustainability transitions literature not accounting for power. In the case of Growing Power, this is brought to light through the food system and through uneven urban development that has left many black neighborhoods behind. Besides just bringing to light such issues of racial and economic inequality, Growing Power also shows the importance of economic development and generating tangible economic benefits in terms of building political power and influence. Sustainability transitions literature, on the other hand, approaches the replication, expansion, and translation of sustainability practices as merely a managerial issue.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I provide a direct comparison of all of the hybrid organizations, their visions of sustainability, their sustainable practices, and their outcomes. In doing so, I argue for a redefinition of sustainability that is always ‘from the bottom up’ as uneven sustainable development inherently displaces environmental,

social, and economic bads. Then, I outline the hybrid organizational structures that are capable of contributing to this vision of sustainability.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND URBAN AGRICULTURE:
EXTRACTING VALUE FROM FORGOTTEN NEIGHBORHOODS

Localism has been offered up by policymakers, academics, and community organizers as a solution to many ills, ranging from ecological degradation, to social disempowerment, to corporate power and market concentration. In such cases, localism is considered the morally, politically, and economically virtuous alternative to global, national, and local state arrangements and economic interventions. The growing number of studies examining effects of localism, particularly local and alternative food systems, show that there is no single set of relations that define localism. And, they also show that localist efforts can produce diverse outcomes (Campbell 1997; Allen 1999; Hinrichs 2003; Winter 2003; Goodman 2004; Dupuis & Goodman 2005; DuPuis, Goodman & Harrison 2006; Hess 2007, 2009; Hess et al. 2010). Much of this analysis has been shaped by concerns and theoretical frameworks from rural sociology, including emphases on consumers, producers, and markets. These approaches, while valuable, tell us too little about the critical role cities play in localist agriculture projects. Not only are they sites of the consumption of localist agriculture, but they are, increasingly, sites of production, too, and they can be exploitative rather than equalizing. Indeed, cities throughout the Midwest and the Northeast United States have been looking to urban agriculture as a solution to problems of blight, unemployment, and food security (Fletcher 2012). It is in urban settings that an examination of alternative food systems as sustainable development requires a reconsideration of scale and of the inequalities that can be produced via localist

urban agriculture and other ‘greening’ efforts, beyond understanding the social construction of regional collective identity that has thus far dominated discussions of localism.

Using the case of the Chicago Honey Co-op (the CHC), I show that some forms of localist initiatives actually reproduce inequality, rather than remediate it. By illustrating the flows of people and resources between the UFC, the community in which it is located, and the region’s middle-class local foods movement, I identify a phenomenon that I call *extractive localism*. Despite the intention of those involved in the Chicago Honey Co-op to “do good,” I argue that its configuration as a “for-benefit social business” is representative of its *neoliberal local* context. Using this concept, I challenge the “boundedness” of place and the understanding of scale in the local foods movement by highlighting the *socio-natural flows* made possible by the spatial and cultural mobility of the social entrepreneurs who created the CHC. I then compare this approach to that of community-based non-profits, Growing Power, Inc., and the Evergreen Cooperatives. Extractive localism complicates understandings of localism as either in resistance to neoliberalism or as an expression of neoliberalism, and provides answers to how and why localism can benefit some groups rather than others in urban settings.

Evidence is drawn from ethnographic observation, interviews, and media coverage of the CHC and associated initiatives such as the Chicago chapter of the Slow Food movement. I attended events at the CHC bee farm (as it is referred to by the staff) and elsewhere related to the wider local foods movement, and I observed at farmer’s markets. My first-hand knowledge was supplemented by media coverage, the CHC’s

public outreach and communications made via their web site, and through my involvement with other organizations within the region's local foods movement.

The Chicago Honey Co-op was started in 2003 and was located in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago until 2012. North Lawndale is an economically depressed neighborhood. Thirty-nine percent of the households in North Lawndale live below the poverty line, the population is 94% Black (City of Chicago n.d.), and it has been identified as one of the top six communities in the state with regards to concentration of parolees (La Vigne et al. 2003). Like many “polycentric” organizations, the Chicago Honey Co-op has a hybrid structure—it is part firm, part voluntary association, part nonprofit; it involves at least four constituencies; and links numerous groups including social movement organizations, community organizations, social service providers, and small businesses. Thoroughly embedded in the region's local foods movement, the CHC is a staple in the city's high-profile farmers market that caters to the city's chefs and foodies. Additionally, multiple boutique grocery stores and fine-dining restaurants carry CHC products throughout the city including Provenance Food and Wine and Bread & Wine Bistro (Chicago Honey Co-op, n.d.; Bread and Wine, n.d.). Also, the local Slow Food chapter, one of the most prominent organizations in the local foods movement, actively promotes the CHC's products through newsletters, exhibits and demonstrations at the annual membership meeting, and through various events during the year. In 2008, the local Slow Food chapter appointed the two members of the CHC staff as delegates of Slow Food Chicago and paid most of their expenses to attend the international Slow Food gathering, *Terra Madre*, held bi-annually in Torino, Italy.

In an address to the membership during the 2010 annual membership meeting, the out-going president of the local Slow Food chapter, Bob Pallota, described the Chicago Honey Co-op as “standing for everything we do.” He called it a resounding success, an exemplary enterprise that contributes to the Slow Food mission of creating a food system based on “equity, sustainability, and pleasure” (Slow Food, n.d.). What allows for the CHC to appear as if is addressing such diverse issues is its hybrid organizational form. The CHC simultaneously functions as:

- a nonprofit charitable organization through its job training for the under-employed
- an urban farm that hosts a significant community garden within its boundaries;
- an environmental organization, via the promotion and practice of sustainable food production and brownfield remediation;
- a small business incubator that provides production space for aspiring artisans and entrepreneurs; and
- a retail business that produces value-added goods that are sold for profit.

This hybrid form is made possible by the fact that the CHC is a social enterprise. Social enterprise is an umbrella term for organizations that use market-based strategies to promote social equity and enhance environmental sustainability. The CHC is an informal not-for-profit in that the board of directors has intentionally not filed for 501(c)(3) status because they perceive the recordkeeping and reporting requirements to be an impediment to their goals of keeping the organization small, in order to avoid the bureaucracy of

hiring an accountant and to escape a “treadmill” that could result in growth but could incur debt. This hybrid organizational form allows the entrepreneurs running the CHC to acquire resources from, and exchange with, various constituent groups in order to operate the organization and to adequately pay themselves. While not necessarily a new form, hybrid forms such as social enterprises and enterprising nonprofits have spread under neoliberalism, as I explain below.

Neoliberal Localism and Social Enterprise

A popular frame used to comprehend globalization conceptualizes “the local” as eroding due to cultural homogenization (Ritzer 1993) and deterritorialization (Castells 1996; Sassen 2001). In this view, social relations are increasingly disconnected from local contexts due to the advancement of capitalist communication and transportation technologies. Other analyses have posed alternative ways to understand the global-local relationship, arguing that that globalization does not so much indicate a loss of the local as it does a redefinition of the relationship between local and global. Inda and Rosaldo (2002), for example, describe this as a process of *reterritorialization* in which people develop a cosmopolitan consciousness through the use of communication and transportation technology. Through increased access to and knowledge of the world, argue Inda and Rosaldo, people are thought to develop a new understanding of what is distinctive about their local surroundings and what “local” even means.

The rise of neoliberal globalization has contributed to this paradoxical process of the relocalization of society. Globalization, here, refers to the growing role of international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, and global financial institutions in structuring access to symbolic and

material benefits (Ong 2006; Harvey 2006, 2007, 2010; Moore et al. 2011; Sen 1991, 1992, 1999, 2000). These changes have been made possible by neoliberal policies that embrace the use of markets to fulfill policy objectives that were previously carried out by states. This includes trade liberalization, state-assisted privatization of public goods and services, and the expansion of market-based efforts to address social problems.

Neoliberal globalization helps to explain the declining influence of nation-states on their own economies as finance and commodity supply chains have become global.

International trade regulations and agencies have induced changes at all levels of government by eliminating tariffs and dismantling protectionist policies deemed inefficient. One response has been for state and local governments to sidestep the federal government in connecting to the global economy. However, often facing financial constraints of their own, local governments increasingly pass financial and social functions and responsibilities on to the private sector. Depending on the service and the market, such responsibilities may be taken on by multinational corporations, local businesses, non-profit organizations, or any combination of private sector entities.

In response to these political-economic and cultural changes, a variety of movements with localist agendas have developed. Hess (2009: 5) differentiates what he calls *localism* from *technopoles*, the “*back to the land*” movement, and *political decentralization*. He describes localism as “the movement in support of government policies and economic practices oriented toward enhancing local democracy and local ownership of the economy in a historical context of corporate-led globalization” (2009: 7). He challenges the idea of localism as a social movement, opting instead to describe it as an “alternative pathway” as it may include elements of contention (i.e., industrial

opposition movements like the anti-GMO activism), reform movements (i.e., technology and product-oriented movements like the movements behind organic foods and renewable energy technologies), non-profits and community-based organizations, cooperatives, and locally-owned and operated small businesses (Hess 2007).

DuPuis, Goodman, and Harrison (2006: 256), by contrast, question whether relocalization, exemplified in the efforts of alternative food systems, is actually a form of resistance or whether it perpetuates neoliberal precepts of marketization and deregulation by focusing efforts on expanding local markets. They conclude that localism is not in opposition to neoliberalism; instead localism is embedded within neoliberalism. Additionally, localism's appeal to both the left and the right of the political spectrum aids in the reproduction and internalization of neoliberalism. Such political ideals include participatory politics for the left and the rhetoric of the free market on the right. The international Slow Food Movement (SFM) sees itself as transcending the political spectrum in this way. According to SFM founder Carlo Petrini, the organization specifically seeks to bridge the left-right divide, pleasing both the conservative desire to maintain traditions and rural ways of life and the leftist aspiration for social justice (Andrews 2008).

In coining the terms "defensive politics of localization" or "defensive localism," Hinrichs (2003) and Winters (2003) acknowledge what DuPuis, Goodman and Harrison call the potential for localist politics to be parochial and elitist. Hinrichs argues that some forms of localism abet the displacement of local economic hardship to alternative geographic places. As an example, she points to the initial defensive tendencies of food system localization in Iowa that were spurred by the state department of agriculture's

efforts to counter global markets for agricultural products. Similarly, Guthman (2008a, 2008b) critiques alternative food practices taking place in California, which often promote forms of localism, as being exclusionary to people of color as the alternative food discourse and practice tends to be dominated by white activists and their values and experiences are assumed to be universal. As an antidote to these defensive and exclusionary tendencies of localism, DuPuis and Goodman (2005) argue, is what they call a *reflexive localism* that is engaged in a global politics of justice and sustainability. Taken together, through this re-characterization of localist politics, Hinrichs, Winter, and DuPuis and Goodman untangle the dominant conceptualization of localist politics and draw our attention to its Janus face: both parochial and elitist, but also vital to sustaining local economies.

Adopting DuPuis and Goodman's framework, Hess surveys U.S. community gardens and associated activities. Hess chooses community gardens because of their import within the local foods movement and how they are often promoted as a solution to the issue of access to healthy and fresh foods for poor, Black urban communities in the United States. What he finds is that through interactions with local governments and through coalitions that address federal and state level policy "community gardening presents a coherent vision of how to link the goals of local sovereignty, sustainability, and distributive justice, and it does so by constantly working with (and occasionally against) governments to demand support, including the use of public lands for gardens" (2009: 156). Yet he also argues that these arrangements call for further study:

...[the example of community gardening] suggests that it may be easier to find an approximation of sustainability, justice, and local ownership in the

nonprofit sector than in the small-business sector. The gray zone between nonprofit charitable and environmental organizations and for-profit independent retail businesses and farms—that is, the growing sector of nonprofit social enterprises and for-benefit social businesses—also deserves further attention from social scientists who study the potential linkages among localism, sustainability, and justice (2009: 160).

This chapter undertakes this challenge by investigating how the Chicago Honey Co-op exemplifies Hess's term "gray zone." On a spectrum that denotes organizational structure and mission, from for-profit to non-profit, the CHC sits in the middle as a social enterprise. The organizational form itself raises the question of whether food producers and food production can be a focal point for activism regarding equitable food access and sustainable agriculture. Clearly, social enterprise is the default method of activism for much of the local foods movement as evidenced by the ubiquity of efforts to grow local markets, not to mention the extensive business trainings for individual producers offered by myriad organizations arranged along the "alternative pathway" of local food. Indeed, small producers who supply local markets often face toil, low pay, and the inability to access the subsidies offered to conventional farmers who grow cash crops. The "in between" status of local food producers reproduces some of the same conceptual challenges that farmers caused for social theorists such as Karl Marx: peasant farmers were too disorganized and dispersed to constitute a unified class (Marx [1852] 1978) while entrepreneurial farmers either became capitalists or ended up moving to cities and joining the proletariat (Marx [1867] 1990).

Simply considering the Chicago Honey Co-op as “in between” the for-profit and non-profit poles of a spectrum, and towards the local pole on a local-global spectrum, suggests that it would also fall in between defensive and reflexive localism. However, Hess (2009) suggests including a third axis in order to analyze and compare such projects under globalization: the third axis being elitist-populist. While all three of the above-mentioned projects fall towards the local end of the spectrum, they vary according to the other two. Hinrich’s example of 1990s local food producers in Iowa would tilt towards for-profit and elitist (or parochial) poles; Hess’s example of community garden networks would favor the non-profit and populist poles; and finally, the Chicago Honey Co-op would fall in between for-profit and non-profit and populist and elitist spectrums. What this suggests is that the CHC, and other localist projects operating within the social enterprise model, may produce social, economic, and environmental outcomes that cannot simply be described as in between defensive and reflexive but rather contradictory, ambiguous, or all together distinct. Therefore, in order to determine where a localist project falls along the populist-elitist axis, one first must know the distribution of the social, economic, and environmental costs and benefits produced. In the following sections, I examine how the Chicago Honey Co-op defines the benefits it produces, as well as unpublicized outcomes, in order to evaluate the organization’s populist claims. I start with a background on the organization.

The Chicago Honey Co-op

The idea for the Chicago Honey Co-op came about in 2003 when three area bee keepers came together with a vision of starting a small business centered on an urban apiary. Their search for cheap land brought them to areas of the city that had suffered the

most from deindustrialization, where many residents were living in poverty. In addition, they began seeking out community organizations in prospective neighborhoods with whom they could partner. The farmers found the most enthusiasm and support for their project from the North Lawndale Greening Committee ('the Greening Committee'), a community group made up of a handful of middle class Black families who seek to fight blight by developing green spaces and gardens in their community. Through the Greening Committee, the farmers were introduced to the North Lawndale Employment Network ('the Employment Network'), a non-profit organization that helps North Lawndale residents overcome barriers to securing employment.

The Employment Network was eager to develop a job training program geared toward young men returning to the neighborhood after being incarcerated. With problems of unemployment and recidivism, the Governor and the state's Department of Corrections developed a program to help formerly incarcerated people re-integrate into society. The program had targeted \$2 million of its grant money to the North Lawndale neighborhood because it was identified as one of the top six communities in the state with the highest concentration of parolees (La Vigne et al. 2003). Stemming from a meeting of the three groups, the Employment Network developed a new jobs training project for individuals from the neighborhood who had been recently incarcerated modeled around an urban apiary that would sell honey and other honey and hive products. According to one of the founding members of the CHC, the Employment Network secured a \$100,000 grant from the state's re-entry program and they brought on board the three farmers to help their project get off the ground beginning in the spring of 2004. Through this partnership, the three farmers found the seed money for their urban farm including the money for rent,

tools, equipment, and salaries. Some of the initial labor, then, was provided by the job trainees.

North Lawndale is an economically depressed neighborhood. It was the original home of a Sears, Roebuck & Company. However, in 1974 the corporation exited the neighborhood, relocated its corporate headquarters downtown, and began to focus on retail box stores mostly serving the suburbs. The distribution center at the headquarters in North Lawndale was dissolved during this transition. The Chicago Honey Co-op sits atop this company's vacant parking lot. It is surrounded on three sides by a 10-foot chain link fence topped with barbed wire and a raised railroad bed on its north border. The lot had been used by Sears to park semi-trailers and portable storage containers that were offloaded from trains. Towards the west end of the lot the land has been developed into a community garden in a joint effort between the CHC and the Greening Committee. The parking lot area itself is made up of 175 twenty foot by twenty foot concrete slabs, arranged seven deep from the street to the railroad bed and twenty-five across. Spread throughout the lot are 80 white hives, 2 temporary storage facilities that act as tool sheds, old lawn chairs and picnic tables, and weeds and trees growing from the cracks in the cement.

The property was pursued by the beekeepers because it contained large enough tracts of land for the project to grow. The lot was attractive to the beekeepers because of its size as well as the raised railroad bed on the northern border, which they hoped would block the wind and thereby create better conditions for their bees. According to the farm manager and founding member, the project approached the development corporation that owned the property, which agreed to rent the property at a significantly reduced rate since

they had no immediate plans to develop it and thought that CHC would help to increase property values.

According to farm manager, the job training program that initial summer was a failure. It lacked organization, and the intermittent activity of harvesting honey and the otherwise low maintenance of keeping a hive meant that there was not always work for the trainees. Additionally, disagreements over the budget and operations generated distrust between the beekeepers and the Employment Network staff. After the first year, the two organizations decided to part ways. Since that time, the Employment Network has continued with the development of a similar jobs training program called Sweet Beeginings, LLC with their own line of honey and honey-infused body care products called beelove™ (Sweet Beeginings, n.d.). The two groups no longer publicly associate with each other. However, the Chicago Honey Co-op continued to claim job training to be part of its operations until 2011, despite not having an organized job training program since the initial partnership in the summer of 2004. This is likely due to the volunteer apiarist program that the CHC organized which resembled their job training operations.

Without the support of the Employment Network and the income provided by grants, the farmers began to focus on developing a “business model” that redefined the project as a self-sustaining enterprise funded through retail sales. According to the farm manager, part of their plan to tap the local market included attaching the word “cooperative” to their name, since many local food consumers, they thought, would support such an enterprise. This has caused some confusion among consumers, however. Observations at farmer’s markets show that customers frequently ask questions about the meaning of cooperative when they purchase items at the CHC booth. People are surprised

to find that the CHC is a consumer cooperative instead of a worker or producer cooperative. Cooperative membership operated by simply paying up front and receiving credits that could be used throughout the farmers market season. However, there was no discount offered, and by 2012 there was no longer any evidence of the cooperative program at the CHC farmers market booth nor online.

Another important aspect of the Chicago Honey Co-op's independence from the Employment Network, as well as its previous reliance on grant money, was that it fostered support from a handful of local community members via the Greening Committee. Due to having extra land that was not being used, the beekeepers decided to develop some of the land on their lot as a garden for themselves and members of the Greening Committee. Since then, the two organizations have become increasingly intertwined: in the past, board members of the Greening Committee also sat on the board of the CHC. In addition, they have partnered on a few community projects, most notably another community garden four blocks south of the CHC called the preSERVE Garden. While the project was primarily administered by CHC and the Greening Committee since they were located in the neighborhood, the project was organized by Slow Food Chicago. Members of Slow Food Chicago provided the majority of volunteer labor as the preSERVE Garden was devised in order to do "outreach to other communities" and to answer the critics of the Slow Food Movement who thought Slow Food was white and elitist, according to the Slow Food board member responsible who came up with the idea for the garden.

As of 2011, the Chicago Honey Co-op employs three workers, all less than full-time. Each staff member makes less than \$30,000 per year. Likely due to the low pay,

some of the staff use the CHC as a platform to generate supplemental income, employing the organization's physical and natural capital. Such activities are all "above board" and conducted with the endorsement of the board of directors. Indeed, the farm manager has various "side projects" that use the CHC's land and equipment in conjunction with the social and cultural capital he has accumulated from his involvement with the local foods movement. The farm manager spends much of his time in the garden growing produce, which he sells to restaurants for his personal benefit. These restaurants tend to be those committed to serving locally produced foods. For example, in August of 2010, citing a niche market in garlic due to a worldwide shortage, the farm manager and a business partner invested \$2,000 in garlic bulbs, purchased from an organic farm in southern Wisconsin. In late September, with the help of volunteers, they planted them in the community garden. The farm manager and his business partner planned to harvest them and sell them to Chicago area restaurants, again for their own benefit.

The farm manager also has benefitted from the fact that he is recognized throughout Chicago as an urban beekeeping expert. He holds contracts as an apiarist-for-hire including one with the City of Chicago to maintain rooftop bee hives. He harvests the honey, processes, and packages products which are then sold in the gift shop of the Chicago Cultural Center. He also has a side business doing small residential landscaping jobs. For all of his jobs, the farm manager uses the same tools and equipment. Yet which tools are his and which tools belong to the CHC is unclear, since most of it is stored in the bed of his pickup truck. Likewise, the line between what constitutes personal time and what constitutes time working for the CHC is blurred. Part of this ambiguity is due to the fact that he is only a part-time employee and spends many additional hours on site or

meeting other local and artisanal producers and consumers at local food and urban agriculture events around Chicago often sponsored by Slow Food Chicago or Advocates for Urban Agriculture.

Most of the farm manager's *secondary* activities benefit both the CHC, and his own ventures since the products are often complementary in terms of consumer desire for locally produced food. Indeed, the board of directors of the CHC encourages these activities. Moreover, many volunteers offer to help with the farm manager's ventures, citing their commitment to local foods, and sometimes he pays them for their work.

With only three employees and limited revenue, the Chicago Honey Co-op is dependent on volunteers and in-kind donations. The human resources departments for large corporate headquarters based in Chicago often try to arrange volunteer days for their workers at the CHC. For example, early in the spring of 2010 Kraft Foods brought forty employees to spend a day helping the CHC prepare soil for planting. However, the majority of volunteer work is organized on an individual basis or through Slow Food Chicago's project committees. Most volunteers end up working in the community garden or on general maintenance and beautification projects. Some volunteers who have built relationships with the CHC staff help with the value-added processing. These activities generally happen in a commercial kitchen space off site or in the CHC's donated warehouse space. Additionally, some of the harvesting is done by volunteers. Volunteer labor accounts for a significant portion of the total labor input.

The CHC relies on many other types of donations as well. The organization's web page, product labels, and logo were all created for free by designers sympathetic with local food production and friends of the staff. In addition, the beeswax candle molds were

all purchased by a volunteer and subsequently donated when she moved out of state. In 2011, the CHC initiated a campaign to raise \$10,000 which was planned to be used to purchase and then breed queen bees for their own hives as well as to sell to the public.

Today, the CHC is both a business and a charity, facilitated by the charismatic authority of the farm manager and the flexible organizational structure that combines non-profit and business goals. From the outside, the organization is sustained by the donations and volunteer labor of middle class consumers and activists of the local foods movement who are committed to seeing local food producers succeed.

Local Food and the Extraction of Value from Urban Communities

The case of the Chicago Honey Co-op presents evidence for the insufficiency of the usual ways of thinking about “local” in terms of scale and in contrast to the “global.” Goodman (2004) and Hinrich (2003) recognize the social and historical construction of collective understandings of what is local. In the case of the Chicago local foods movement, what is considered “local food” extends beyond the boundaries of the city since small, urban food producers produce limited quantities and varieties of food. In addition, largely due to agricultural policy, over 90 percent of cultivated farm land in Illinois is dedicated to industrial corn, soy, and wheat production (USDA 2011). Therefore, food from out of state is often considered local and promoted by the Chicago local foods movement. This includes dairy from Wisconsin, orchard fruits from Michigan, and produce from Indiana. However, this regional understanding of what local means is at the center of the extractive relationship between the largely white, middle class local foods movement and the North Lawndale neighborhood, the community that

hosts the CHC. In other words, the benefits generated by the CHC are mainly distributed outside of North Lawndale.

To shed light on this extractive relationship, I look to how urban political ecologists have studied issues of scale as it relates to environmental injustice in urban settings. Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) argue that social phenomena may produce outcomes related to equity, justice, and empowerment. However, when looked at from the perspective of different scales, such outcomes may appear negligible or contradictory. For example, Heynen (2003) demonstrates how urban greening efforts in a single neighborhood exacerbate the unequal distribution of trees across the Indianapolis metropolitan area. While a single neighborhood may be benefitting from increased environmental amenities, the unequal distribution of environmental benefits grows, or the inequality becomes more intensified in neglected neighborhoods. I apply a similar neighborhood-level analysis of the benefits generated by urban agricultural enterprise and the neighborhood of North Lawndale.

At first glance, the Chicago Honey Co-op appears to provide a net gain for the regional food economy and urban agriculture promoted by the Chicago local foods movement. In this sense, the CHC is a “successful” venture, creating economic development and enhancing biodiversity in a neighborhood suffering from disinvestment and the dislocation of jobs. Additionally, the CHC is valued by local food consumers for generating a quality product in an environmentally sustainable manner, particularly in the face of growing industrial concentration and consolidation in the food system (see, e.g., Heffernan et al. 1999; Hendrickson et al. 2001; Bonnano 2009; Howard 2009). However, when examining the UFC’s influence on socio-natural flows at the level of Chicago

neighborhoods—as opposed to the city or metropolitan regional level—a different story begins to emerge. More specifically, the economic benefits of the enterprise and the charity that is directed to the CHC—at least some of which is intended to promote the self-sufficiency of North Lawndale residents—largely remains inaccessible to the residents of the neighborhood.

While an analysis at the neighborhood level may appear to be hyper-local, Chicago's unique history and physical features make this conceptualization problematic. In contrast to many other major urban centers, Chicago's neighborhoods are typically separated by physical barriers such as the elevated train, railroad tracks, and vacant land (Young 2004). North Lawndale, in particular, is surrounded by three rail yards and an expressway. Even before the construction of the expressway, North Lawndale was a well-defined community and was recognized as a distinct Community Area by the University of Chicago Social Science Research Committee as early as the 1920s. Such physical barriers have only exacerbated the racial segregation, poverty concentration, and social isolation contributing to Chicago's long-held title as the most segregated city in the United States (Glaeser & Vigdor 2012). According to the 2010 census, North Lawndale has approximately 36,000 residents, 94% of whom are Black and 38.6% of the households live below the poverty line (City of Chicago 2012). There is thus precedence for examining these Community Areas as important spatial units. This history has served to minimize competing social and cultural constructions of place, implying shared conceptions of community areas amongst community members.

A second issue of scale has to do with the size of the enterprise. Demand for the CHC's products from individual consumers, retail outlets, and high-end restaurants

outstrips the supply. Indeed, the CHC could increase supply by adding labor and purchasing minimal additional equipment. The CHC already has access to the land necessary to expand production; they also have the equipment. In this sense, the CHC could provide more opportunities to individuals in the neighborhood in search of work. However, instead of increasing production to meet demand, the CHC has a policy of not selling their goods at the local farmer's market from mid-September until January, in order to meet demand in December for holiday gifts.

In contrast, other urban agricultural organizations, including Growing Power, Inc. of Chicago, Illinois and the Evergreen Cooperatives of Cleveland, Ohio have instituted growth and expansion as part of their mission as a way to employ increasing numbers of community members. In the summer of 2012, for example, Growing Power, Inc. added 10 gardens in Chicago in order to create a "community food system" and increase access to fresh, healthy foods. In order to build and maintain these sites, Growing Power, Inc. added paid staff and roughly doubled the size of their youth training program, in which middle school and high school students learn the skills needed to grow food for market while earning a stipend (Growing Power, n.d.). Likewise, the Evergreen Cooperatives of Cleveland, Ohio have institutionalized expansion of their training programs, which then feeds graduates directly into worker-owned for-profit enterprises. This is part of their mission to "build community wealth" and an "inclusive economy." In 2011, the Evergreen Cooperatives broke ground on the Green City Growers Cooperative, Inc., the first worker-owned industrial green house in the United States (Evergreen Cooperatives, n.d.).

Thus, these organizations stand in stark contrast to the “extractive localism” exhibited by the Chicago Honey Co-op and the Chicago local foods movement. Despite growing demand for the UFC’s products, the organization has not expanded the participation of North Lawndale residents, and does not have a program to provide additional employment for residents of the neighborhood in which the enterprise is located, and on which its leaders have built their reputations.

However, non-profit organizations and for-profit enterprises, alike, fear the uncertainty of being able to sustain rapid growth. Additionally, organizations with a social mission tend to shun the bureaucratization tied to growth, anxious about the possibility of muddying the original vision of the organization. For these reasons, the development of adding a third employee in 2010 may actually fit the board of director’s idea of sustained growth and a plan of extending economic opportunity to residents of North Lawndale in the future.

In summary, two distinct yet intertwined issues of scale need to be taken into account when examining the distribution of benefits generated by urban agricultural enterprise. The first issue of scale, challenges the idea that the downscaling of production to the local level benefits everyone at that level equally. While economic development is always uneven, the demand for some products allows for expansion and the extension of economic benefits. This raises the second issue, the scale of production. Despite the demand for their products, the organization chooses not to take advantage of market demand. This is most likely due to a prioritization of self-preservation, and possibly with a vision for eventually extending economic benefits in the future under a more managed form of growth.

Channeling Resource Flows

The Chicago Honey Co-op coordinates the social processes that metabolize various resources which produce a specific urban nature, one that includes transforming a concrete parking lot into a green space and productive agricultural land. However, by shifting the analysis of scale from region to neighborhood it becomes clear that many of the economic benefits are distributed beyond North Lawndale. The analysis of resource flows into and out of Jasper indicates that the CHC, in conjunction with the local foods movement, does not live up to its reputation of promoting distributive economic, environmental, and social justice.

As stated above, the organization attracts significant donations. Coming in to the organization is grant money, various forms of labor, revenue and monetary donations, donations of materials and equipment, as well as horse manure, compost and seeds for the gardens and honey bees. The CHC then uses those inputs to produce urban nature in the form of a healthy bee population and increased biodiversity, spaces like the community garden, and food products such as honey and fresh produce.

The benefits of this urban nature, however, are negligible to all but a select few of North Lawndale residents: members of the Greening Committee. A healthy bee population and increased biodiversity have little to no impact on a residents' everyday life or economic security. Likewise, the actual agricultural and processed goods are largely sent to consumers and retail outlets that have the ability to pay premium prices. As of July 2014, the average retail price of conventional honey in the United States is \$6.18 per pound (National Honey Board, n.d.) while a pound of honey from the Chicago Honey Co-op retails for \$16.00 (Chicago Honey Co-op, n.d.). Residents of the

neighborhood who do consume CHC products are most likely the volunteers connected to the Greening Committee, who maintain their own garden plots and do not pay retail prices.

Still, the CHC's creation of gardens has the potential to enhance environmental justice via brownfield remediation and the overall distribution of green space. However, unlike a city park, users of this garden are largely restricted to the middle class families of the Greening Committee, the CHC staff and their friends. This space is locked behind a fifteen foot tall chain link fence when there is not a representative from these two groups present. Similar to Shepard and Smithsimon's (2011) typology of public space, the analysis of green space, its distribution, and its impact on environmental justice must take into account the restriction of users and uses. Community gardens are qualitatively different, in terms of access and exclusion, than city parks and public plazas. The organization of urban nature influences how, and if, people experience it. Overall, the impact that this garden has on the everyday life of the community is limited.

Lastly, the obvious economic benefit to the CHC is money. In terms of salaries for the organization's three employees, only one resides in the neighborhood. On the most basic level, the majority of income generated by this enterprise exits the neighborhood, since the other two employees live outside of Jasper in middle class neighborhoods. Both of them enjoy significant mobility within the city and between its neighborhoods, freely entering and exiting North Lawndale by bicycle, public transportation, and in their own personal vehicles. Furthermore, if more of the wealth generated by the enterprise were to stay in North Lawndale, then the economic development model of exporting goods outside of the neighborhood could be viable

according to the purported values of the local food movement despite the fact the products are too expensive for neighborhood residents.

Castell's (1996) twin concepts of *space of place* and *space of flows* sheds light on this difference. Space of place refers to fixed communities such as the boundedness of Jasper and the isolation its residents' experience. Space of flows on the other hand refers to placeless communities where connections are made across space and time using information communication and transportation technologies. Despite the direct use of "local" in its name, the Chicago local foods movement is very much a placeless community, or a space of flows. Slow Food Chicago, for example, promotes products made in the Chicago metropolitan region but by no means exclusively. As largely a middle class consumer movement, it celebrates artisanal products from all around the world, particularly the wines and cheeses of Italy and France. Likewise, many of the people in this movement have spent time abroad and often look to European systems of local food production as the goals of the movement. Some people in the local foods movement also advocate for the rights of peasant farmers and are connected to the global food sovereignty movement via the World Social Forum.

The Chicago local foods movement is the CHC staff members' community as evidenced by their heavy participation in Slow Food events and projects. Only one of the three employees has strong familial and community ties to North Lawndale. She rarely participates in the wider Chicago local foods movement, even many events hosted at the CHC. Moreover, she has increasingly withdrawn from selling at the farmers markets because she does not like engaging with the mostly white, middle class consumers and what she interprets as their sanctimony, according to her co-worker. To make up for this,

she has devoted more work time to the solitary duties of packaging and shipping orders and making the value-added products.

In summary, few of the outputs and outcomes of the CHC are put towards improving the lot of North Lawndale residents. The production of urban nature is limited and exclusionary; the food produced is largely sent to middle class consumers; and most of the financial benefits are garnered by non-residents.

Extractive Localism

By tracking material flows, we can see how an extractive relationship begins to emerge. In the beginning, mobile social entrepreneurs enter into the disadvantaged community of North Lawndale, exploiting sunken property values and the availability of land. Next, they develop their enterprise to attract resources and charity. They then employ those resources, including the labor of volunteers and job trainees to set up their operation. Through grants and product sales the social entrepreneurs ensure themselves a steady, albeit modest, income stream, and create additional opportunities that they may personally develop in the future under the aegis of entrepreneurialism, like the farm manager's garlic harvest and apiarist-for-hire ventures. Through these activities, mobile social entrepreneurs extract value, resources, and opportunities from the community. The outcomes, then, resemble the uneven outcomes of prevailing forms of urban economic development.

However, as others have argued, flows are not simply material phenomena (Swyngedouw 2004; Mol & Spaargaren 2005). Indeed, as nature is socially constructed and embedded, so too are conceptions of "resources." In terms of the CHC, the social enterprise model is likely only successful due to it being embedded within the Chicago

local foods movement and the cultural value ascribed by middle class consumers on the products of urban agriculture. Such products are a socio-natural hybrid carrying with it cultural meanings far beyond its physical makeup and being a source of sustenance.

Without the local foods movement and the subsequent demand for the CHC's products and the interest in supporting the enterprise through donations, the CHC would struggle to be successful, and most likely it would not exist, at least in its present hybrid form.

Through this relationship, the Chicago local foods movement extracts cultural value from North Lawndale. Through the purchase and promotion of CHC products, the mostly white middle class membership of the Chicago local foods movement sees itself as creating economic opportunity for the poor black residents of North Lawndale, the objects of their alternative food practices and sustainable development (Guthman 2008) also evidenced in the development of the preSERVE Garden. In a sense, the initial labor provided by job trainees during the inaugural season continues to do symbolic work. The ideas of "a hand up, not a hand out" or "helping others help themselves" inherent in jobs training discourse tend to be shared by members of Slow Food Chicago. Such neoliberal attitudes and ideas are seen as benign because they are shared by the two dominant political parties in the United States.

Slow Food Chicago membership is also cognizant of vague criticisms leveled at the movement for being overwhelmingly white. Since 2010, this has been a topic of discussion at the annual meeting and was the impetus for the preSERVE Garden. Indeed, the willingness of many of the middle class consumers who identify with the local foods movement to pay premium prices for CHC products can be seen as a reaction to the whiteness of the movement. Members who accept this criticism believe that the best thing

that they can do in response is to help develop local food systems by supporting urban agriculture enterprises. Ironically, few members have actually taken the time to investigate the commodity chain, despite the ubiquity of calls within Slow Food to “know where your food comes from” and “know your farmer.”

The local foods movement, then, uses the North Lawndale community in order to legitimize its own practices of consumption and market-driven social change. This is both a materially and culturally extractive relationship, an extractive form of localism. While the term “extractive localism” may appear to be a combination of contradictory words, the scalar ambiguity of localism, the ambiguous mission of social enterprise, and the existence of a movement of consumers of local goods provide the conditions necessary for such a relationship to exist. Most likely, without the active support of the local foods movement, the CHC would not be able to maintain its ambiguous position and would either have to look to the immediate community for more support or become a more overt business.

Conclusion

According to Hess’ three dimensional axis, the Chicago Honey Co-op falls towards the poles of localism and elitism and in between for-profit and not-for-profit. Part of the issue is that there remains ambiguity in the definition of some of the poles of these axes, as I have shown with regards to local. However, those factors alone are not enough to explain the existence of a relation of extractive localism. Other social enterprises with similar “coordinates” may not be extractive and may better serve the community in which it is placed and from which it draws legitimacy. Part of the issue is that the poles of these axes may have contested definitions, as I have shown with regards

to what constitutes local. Similar problems arise when examining the definitions of populist and elitist. Unlike the case of the Iowa local food producers, elitist is not synonymous with parochial in the case of the CHC. Instead, elitist refers to exclusivity regarding access to benefits of the enterprise. More specifically, the benefits are largely exclusive to the white, middle class members of the local foods movement at the expense of the poor, black residents of North Lawndale. Likewise, definitions become ambiguous when not clearly favoring a single pole, as in the case of social enterprise. Indeed, due to political economic changes many non-profits have instituted enterprising features in order to generate revenue for operations. Therefore, the organization of the CHC should not be understood as exemplary of all social enterprise, but instead as one possible form with some unique qualities and some qualities shared with other social enterprises. The case of the CHC shows the variability of social enterprises and localisms dependent on the geography and social relations unique to place. This history of place includes spatial and economic inequality and the growth of the social economy and market-centered activism, which are all connected to the expansion of neoliberal policies. Uncertain definitions aside, the triple axes provides an important starting point for comparison.

The gray spaces produced by hybrid organizational forms are what permit extractive relationship. By not being a community-based organization, the CHC does not necessarily have to be responsive to community needs. At the same, by not being a private business, the CHC has the flexibility to pursue goals other than growth. The connection to the local foods movement, then, allows for even more plasticity as the CHC has built-in demand in terms of the institutional and middle class customer base

associated with the local foods movement. Therefore, the CHC can align itself with the stated values of the movement including social and environmental justice.

The Chicago Honey Co-op's limited commitment to the community can be justified by the involvement of a handful of North Lawndale residents and a more regional understanding of what local means. Despite the active presence of a few North Lawndale residents, only one of which is a paid employee, North Lawndale is seen as the site of production of authentic urban, local food and the neighborhood's largely poor and black residents are imagined to be beneficiaries of the consumer choices of local food activists. In other words, the local foods movement extracts cultural value from North Lawndale as well as legitimacy in the face of criticisms of the movement being predominantly white and middle class. In this way, localism obfuscates the extraction of cultural and material value from North Lawndale and contributes to the uneven distribution of social, economic, and environmental benefits—uneven sustainable development.

Localism promises returns to scale with regards to the geographic proximity of labor, products and profits, job creation, and social solidarity. Urban agriculture is one possible avenue for this. However, as the case of the Chicago Honey Co-op shows, despite good intentions localist efforts do not always live up to their promise largely due to the difficulty of overcoming existing spatial and economic inequality. This is unique to the organizational ecology of urban settings, unlike a rural setting where there are few individual producers and ample land. Instead, urban producers must work not only within wider political-economic confines but also with existing communities and organizations.

In the following chapter, I examine Greencorps Chicago, a green jobs training program. Again, mostly poor black men are the objects of this urban sustainability initiative. However, this is an example of a formal jobs training program, unlike the CHC, where participants learn a variety of transferable skills and practice them, have the opportunity to earn multiple industry-standard certifications and licenses, and nearly 80% of participants have a job within three months of program completion. Moreover, participants have the opportunity to shape the program via a multitude of projects, many of which allow participants the opportunity to return to their neighborhoods and do work that is valued by the community. Through this process, participants become much more than the objects of sustainable development, and instead become actors in a variety of ways through the process of jobs training.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW THE URBAN POOR DEFINE THE BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY:
GREEN JOBS TRAINING AND URBAN NATURE

Most popular depictions of the experiences of sustainable development represent the perspective of white, middle class, college-educated volunteers and, increasingly, social entrepreneurs. As Guthman (2008a, 2008b) argues, the values of white, middle class activists are often assumed to be universal, or they are embedded within sustainability initiatives, such as the organizations that advocate alternative foods. Such portrayals are easily critiqued for failing to meet the goals of social equity as the benefits tend not to extend far beyond the white, middle class such as the case of the Chicago Honey Co-op. In this chapter, I seek to expand the understanding of what the social, environmental, and economic benefits of sustainable development are by incorporating the experiences and perspectives of African American job trainees and low-wage earners who participate in the City of Chicago's green jobs training program, Greencorps Chicago.

For the majority of Greencorps Chicago job trainees, their initial participation is based upon their desire for a job and the chance to make a living. Most of them know little about environmental sustainability, at least in the terms that Greencorps teachers which can be described as a combination of mainstream environmentalism and ecological modernization. Indeed, the intent of the program is not to turn participants into 'environmentalist,' but help them find employment following the completion of the program, and if that employment is in a 'green industry' it is considered an added bonus by program staff and administrators. As a 'transitional jobs training program,' the

majority of Greencorps participants come through probation officer recommendations and the SAFER Foundation (SAFER), which provides services to people who have been recently released from jail or prison. The vast majority of participants are black men which is partially due to the disproportionate imprisonment of black men in the United States and Illinois. For these men, interest in or passion for sustainability are not a requirement for their participation in Greencorps. If it were, Greencorps would struggle to fill its rolls. Instead, Greencorps' mission is to teach the concepts of sustainability and help people who are having difficulty finding employment, for a variety of reasons, receive training in a variety of fields, some green and some not. Greencorps generally receives two to three times the number of applicants than the number of positions available. In recent years, Greencorps and SAFER have worked to develop a more rigorous recruitment and even a try-out in an attempt to find the people who can tolerate the work (especially the manual labor and work outdoors in all kinds of weather), who have the basic education needed to pass the majority of certification tests (i.e., basic math and reading skills), and who will complete the entire 9 month of the program. The tryout attempts to measure basic jobs skills, including manual labor and tasks such as digging and lifting and working in teams in order to solve problems. Besides helping staff get a sense of who will be successful in the program, the tryout also intends to give applicants a sense of the type of work that will be expected from them. According to the program director, Andy Johnson, the intensive tryout has been successful in identifying people who will complete the program as evidenced by the increase in retention and matriculation. However, the tryout schedule is 'grueling' for both applicants and staff. Indeed, simply being accepted was a significant accomplishment and point of pride for

everyone I interviewed. However, according to Johnson, one of his main concerns in the recruitment and tryout process is:

How do we get them to not be so excited and proud of getting into the program, but get focused on being proud of finish the program well. Haven't given that a lot of thought, but... A lot of them don't even know what we do here so during the process—even though we tell them a hundred times what they are going to be doing—they don't know that they're really going to hate it until they start it. Or... they literally believe for themselves that "I don't care what I do, I just need a job" and I think they believe that very strongly and they really do believe it. "As long as I get paid, I don't care what I'm doing."

Closely tied to most participants simply seeking employment, almost all of the men I interviewed told me that they had never thought about the 'natural environment' before. It was quickly clear to me that they had indeed thought about their surroundings before, just not in the social and scientific ways taught by the program. Some of these examples include, Shawn expressing to me his regret over frequently littering on the streets and disrespecting his neighborhood, a practice he stopped after spending hours picking up trash at various sites; or Chuck admitting to me with embarrassment that he had previously enjoying dandelions since he considered them flowers but through Greencorps he has come to understand them as weeds; or Marvel talking about how he used to just think trees were trees and that he didn't know there were different species until he learned that during a treecare course in Greencorps. Such behaviors and beliefs do not stem from not knowing nature, but from having different understandings of socio-nature which include the intersections and combinations of the physical environment,

social processes, and the economy. At a fundamental level, I argue that nature or the environment is not a static or a priori entity, but something that is socially and culturally constructed with shifting and changing boundaries. In this sense, the views of nature according to the men participating in the program are not and cannot be ‘wrong.’ Indeed, their views of nature and life experiences need to be incorporated and understood in order to achieve what Agyeman (2005; 2013) and Agyeman et al. (2003) refers to as a ‘just sustainability’ which connects issues of environmental quality with social equality and justice.

I seek to use contemporary work in urban sociology and ethnography to critique two central traditions in environmental sociology including the examination of environmental attitudes and beliefs and the treadmill of production theory. The roots of the environmental attitudes and beliefs tradition are found in Dunlap’s (1975) examination of the relationship between political orientation (e.g., political ideology and political party affiliation) and ‘pro-environmental attitudes’ and willingness to take political action of college students. This signaled the rise of the study of ‘environmental concern’ which is still a theme examined by scholars of the environmental movement (see Brulle 2008) as well as critics of consumption-oriented social action, i.e., ‘the individuation of environmental concern’ (see Maniates 2001; Szasz 2007). Concern over climate change has re-ignited aspects of this tradition, mostly examining opinion survey data (see Brulle et al. 2012). The most glaring shortcoming of this tradition, however, lies in the disconnect between attitudes and actions, something recently brought to the fore by Haberlein (2012). However, recent developments in urban sociology and urban ethnography shed light on the failure of the studying attitudes and beliefs to capture the

complexity of people's lived experience, particularly their hopes and dreams for the future.

Furthermore, the focus on 'environmental concern,' and to a lesser extent the treadmill of production, fails to critically examine how ideas of 'the environment' and nature are culturally constructed. This problem is even more acute in terms of learning from people who live in urban areas, where scholars often take for granted the existence of nature or assume that urban people do not think about nature. In this way, I seek to connect environmental sociology and urban sociology through culture and politics.

In order to understand Greencorps trainees' lived experience, I spent approximately 6 months embedded in the Greencorps Chicago program, attending staff meetings and trainings, lunch and smoke breaks, off site excursions, including jobs fairs and landscape industry conferences, helping work crews out in the field at sites throughout the city, and, generally, maintaining a presence in the administration offices and at the headquarters at the Chicago Center for Green Technology.

I supplemented the observations that I garnered through my participation by conducting in-depth interviews with program participants and staff. I interviewed 25 of the 60 program participants. These interviews were 30 to 60 minutes in length. I conducted follow-up interviews with 15 of the 25 original participants, again lasting 30-60 minutes each. 18 of the 25 interviewees were black males with prior felony convictions. Such convictions mostly had to do with drugs as the program pre-screened so as to exclude people with felonies that were violent or sex-related. Three participants were black females and one was a white male, all had served time in prison. Two interviewees were young black men who had not had any trouble with the law. One of

them failed to complete high school and was working on his GED at night. The age range was from 19 to 45 with a mean of 33 years old. 21 of the 25 interviewees lived in high poverty, low income neighborhoods on Chicago's south and west sides.

Analytical Strategy

The data collected for this chapter comes from participant-observation with Greencorps Chicago, a public-private partnership between the City of Chicago, multiple non-profit agencies, and a for-profit environmental services and consulting firm. The organization was chosen for a variety of reasons. First, the program is long-established and well respected throughout the city and has even garnered nationwide recognition from organizations such as Green for All. In terms of green jobs training programs, a relatively recent phenomena in workforce and economic development, Greencorps Chicago is iconic and is considered by many the standard with which to measure all other green jobs training programs. The fact that the program is established increases the likelihood that many of the patterns and processes available to ethnographic exploration are intentional and have been repeated and refined at least in terms of the training participants receive. This is also important in terms of examining outcomes such as Greencorps Chicago's high post-program placement rate--nearly at 80% within 3 months of program completion---a number unheard of in the traditional workforce development world. This is largely due to the resources and staff dedicated to assisting and advocating on behalf of each individual trainee.

The second reason the program was chosen was because of its organizational structure. Greencorps Chicago is an exemplary public-private partnership. Along with the Department of Environment partners include: the SAFER foundation which provides a

broad continuum of social services to people returning to Chicago from jail or prison; OAI, Inc., ('opportunity, advancement, and innovation'), a non-profit workforce development agency; and WRD Environmental a for-profit environmental consulting and services firm whose primary sources of revenue include government contracts. There are then a variety of secondary and tertiary contractors to the program including public sector bodies such as the Chicago Parks District and the Cook County Forest Preserves, all the way to the outsourcing of pay roll via Signature Staff, Inc. Furthermore, Greencorps staff, sometimes under pressure from the Mayor's Office, seek to ensure that various non-profits benefit from their work. In the past, this has included building raised beds and other garden-oriented construction for organizations such as NeighborSpace, an urban land trust, and Growing Power, Inc.

Greencorps Chicago

Greencorps Chicago is the largest green jobs training program in Chicago. It first began in 1992 as a pilot program of the City of Chicago Department of the Environment, a municipal innovation at the time and a pet project of then-mayor Richard Daley. The Department of the Environment sought to connect quality of life issues with local economic development. Since its inception, Greencorps has had a dual charge as a job training and community gardening program, where helping community groups and organizations build community gardens—including building fences, raised beds, hardscapes, etc.—was part of the process of skill-building. Only within the last 10 years has the program shifted to become a transitional jobs training program, meaning that it is intended for people with barriers to entry into the workforce. A few things guided this shift, including black constituents and Aldermen putting pressure on then Mayor Daley to

develop more programming and opportunities for the formerly incarcerated, as well as an increase in federal, state, and foundation funding for programs for people recently released from prison. In 2010, Greencorps Chicago received an influx of funding thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act via Community Black Grant Development-Recovery funds. This allowed Greencorps to roughly double the number of participants for the 2011-2012 class to 60.

Greencorps participants usually work a 4-day week with Mondays off. On Mondays, Greencorps has an all-staff meeting, typically with visits from representatives from other city agencies and delegate agencies such as the Chicago Parks District. Following that, all of the instructors hold a separate meeting where they coordinate the crews and activities for the rest of the week, making sure that tools, transportation, and supervision are available for all the crews heading out into the field and putting the final touches on any trainings that will be held at the headquarters in the conference rooms or woodworking shop at the Chicago Center for Green Technology, the first municipally-owned LEED certified platinum building in the nation. Following this, staff return to their individual work areas and attend to their individual responsibilities.

Tuesday through Thursday, Greencorps participants work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and follow their crews either out in the field. Crews usually switch-off working in the field with taking professional development seminars at OAI's offices or taking workshops and classes at the Chicago Center for Green Technology. These classes include principles of horticulture and plant identification, basic mathematics and physics of energy efficiency and retrofitting, or studying for the state certification exam in integrated pest management. Other 'off-campus' trainings include forklift operator's

training and hazardous materials handling and remediation, both conducted by third parties. By the end of the 9 month training, participants will have the opportunity to earn 13 industry-stand certifications and various other training in 'green' and 'non-green' fields such as horticulture, tree care, integrated pest management, ecological restoration (including controlled burns and invasive species removal), building engineering and maintenance, hazardous material clean up, lead abatement and brownfield remediation, road construction flagging, electronics recycling, fork lift operation, Microsoft Office proficiency, GED, and commercial driver licensure. While doing this, participants earn a stipend which comes out to approximately minimum wage (\$8.25 per hour) for the 36 hour work week. Participants are also provided with high-quality health insurance due to the physical nature of most of the work.

The black to white ratio of the program training staff was the inverse of that of the participants. When I began observing in September of 2011, two black men were on the training staff of 12. However, the three support staff who carried out various social work-related activities, such as helping participants with transportation, housing, and childcare as well as finding employment at the conclusion of the program, were all black and employed by the SAFER Foundation, a largely African American organization. Each support staff member worked part time with Greencorps. In 2010, the program doubled its training staff, hiring six more people thanks to Community Block Grant Development-Recovery funds secured by the City of Chicago.

Through the increase in services contracted with WRD Environmental, the city was able to skirt public sector union rules and hire more people at reduced costs. The six new employees did not have union representation and made roughly half of the salary as

the four unionized city workers. This caused some resentment since the training staff had roughly equal duties and responsibilities. The six employees hired using the CBGD-R money knew that their salaries were funded for 2 years. Initially, these new hires held out hope that the City of Chicago Department of Environment would find funding to extend their employment, either public or private, to fund their positions beyond the two-year term. However, once Mayor Rahm Emanuel made his budget priorities clear, this hope dwindled.

After the election of Rahm Emanuel as Mayor of Chicago, the new administration dissolved the Department of Environment, which administered the Greencorps Chicago program, after a short period of downsizing and shifting a handful of programs to other departments. In the late fall of 2011, following the election, Greencorps was absorbed into the Department of Transportation. It was clear to everyone that the significant funding of Greencorps, thanks to the Daley administration, was ending. When I arrived, all training staff expressed a high level of uncertainty about their future employment with Greencorps. In order to deal with the city's budget deficit, Mayor Emanuel had run on a promise of drastically reducing the city's workforce. In May of 2011 he charged all City department managers to cut their payrolls by 10% using a combination of salary reductions and job cuts. The city employees on the staff knew that they were susceptible to being let go, particularly since the Department of Environment had been disbanded and it became clear that Greencorps was not a priority for the administration as evidenced by absorbing it into the Department of Transportation. The Department of Environment had been a pet project of former Mayor Richard Daley, but it was clear that it would be expendable in the cost conscious eyes of the new mayor. During the fall of 2011, the city

staff anticipated eventually losing their jobs. The question became when it would happen and if they would be allowed to finish with the current class of trainees who would graduate in March of 2012. In early December of 2011, news came down that all the city employees on the training staff would be laid off at the end of the year.

Despite this, the new staff members held out hope that the program would be ‘saved’ almost until that year’s class had commenced. Some of them looked to me to do an evaluation that “emphasizes the program’s strengths” and to organize advocates for the program. The training staff managers and the program director, all lamented the fact that they had not organized all of the neighborhood organizations, community organizations, and block clubs that they had helped throughout the year, to advocate to their aldermen to make sure the program was funded. In fact, during the 2011 Mayor’s Landscape Awards, many of the community gardeners became upset upon first hearing the news that the program was most likely going to be cut. The winner of the Gardener of the Year Award profusely thanked Greencorps and the staff and made a pitch to “make sure Greencorps continues.” However, to much of the staff’s dismay, Mayor Emanuel did not show up to the event. The Mayor’s office instead sent a surrogate—his newly appointed Chief Sustainability Officer Karen Weigert. Staff were disappointed because they felt snubbed by the Mayor, and they were suspect of Weigert simply because she was appointed by Emanuel. Prior to the event, the Greencorps staff member and long-time city employee who had organized the previous ten Mayor’s Landscape Awards, saw this as the last, best hope to showcase some of the positive outcomes produced by Greencorps.

The year following my initial observation, Greencorps did experience a reduction in staff, a reduction in participants to 35, and a reduction in training time. The large number of participants during my time there had been an aberration due to the influx of CBGD-R funds. At the time, the program director discussed the difficulty of organizing such a training for 60 individuals and the fear that the content and experience were suffering from being stretched too thinly. Since that time, the uncertainty around the continuation of the program has subsided. Three classes have matriculated and the program has found support from within the Mayor's office staff, the Chief Sustainability Officer, and the (now-former) Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation, Gabe Klein.

Connecting Urban Poverty and the Environment

Sociological examinations of the experience poor, urban blacks are primarily found in the subdiscipline of urban sociology. In terms of how this group of people sees and understands the world, the 'culture of poverty' thesis has shaped much of the discourse. I start this section examining the culture of poverty thesis and how recent developments in urban sociology and urban ethnography have responded to culture of poverty arguments. I then use these developments to inform my own empirical evidence and apply this to debates and developments in urban political ecology and environmental sociology.

The "culture of poverty" model argues that poverty generates a set of cultural beliefs and practices that are pathological and deficient. This culture, by definition, is degenerate and self-perpetuating as such beliefs and practices ensure the social reproduction of poverty, despite changes in structure and economic opportunity. The

roots of this analysis are found in Lewis (1966) and the report written by then-Assistant Secretary of Labor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan called *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965). Moynihan wrote in response to genetic explanations of black poverty as he identified the legacy of slavery as a hindrance to the upward mobility of black people in the United States. Additionally, the Moynihan report focused on black families headed by single mothers. While refraining from essentializing such families as problematic, Moynihan argued that they did hinder black progress as they were ‘out of sync’ with mainstream society and therefore a significant contributor to the plight of black families and the difficulty of advancement. The policy recommendations in the report, then, focused on “strengthening” the black family—in effect demonizing single-mother headed black households and steering policy discussion away from actually taking on racism, segregation, and poverty. The scholarship that grew out of early studies of black poverty suggested that people must change their culture—attitudes and behaviors—in order to escape poverty.

Ryan (1976) was an early critic of culture of poverty scholarship, describing it as “blaming the victim.” While the growing critique of the culture of poverty model was mildly successful in helping future scholars avoid such pitfalls, it was not able to stem the use of the thesis within the discourses of public policy and the mainstream media. For the most part, during the early 1980s, scholars avoided studying the intersection of culture and poverty until Wilson (1987) introduced the twin concepts of social isolation and poverty concentration as explanatory variables in contemporary urban poverty. Wilson’s work problematized the focus on the actions of the urban poor as the cause of poverty by

showing how structural issues create alienation and social and geographic distance between the poor and mainstream institutions.

Wilson's work showed that culture and structure are co-constructed. One has no explanatory power—with regards to urban poverty—without the other. This insight became the impetus for a new generation of scholars looking at urban poverty. Recently, Small, et al. (2010:8) summarized the use and understanding of “culture” in this new body of scholarship:

“It typically rejects the idea that whether people are poor can be explained by their values. It is often reluctant to divide explanations into ‘structural’ and ‘cultural,’ because of the increasingly questionable utility of this old distinction. It generally does not define culture as comprehensively as Lewis did, instead being careful to distinguish values from perceptions and attitudes from behavior. It almost always sets aside the ideas that members of a group or nation share ‘a culture’ or that a group’s culture is more or less coherent or internally consistent. In many cases, its conceptions of culture tend to be more narrowly defined... [I]t also tends to draw on... cultural anthropology and cultural sociology.”

As part of this new movement of scholars of urban poverty, Young (2004) explicitly connects research on urban poverty and cultural sociology in laying the foundation of his work. Young seeks to overcome the limited understanding of culture in urban poverty research. Heretofore, the analysis of culture in urban ethnography has been overly deterministic in ascribing value to the observed actions of its subjects. Yet as Young argues, cultural sociology has failed to adequately examine how poor black men

come to understand their world. Through interviews, Young focuses on the words of his subjects, particularly how they understand social mobility and economic opportunity in the United States. This is to view poor black men as agents in the sense of creating meaning, as opposed to simply reacting to their dire economic situations and then having their values deduced by observers of their actions.

Young's major criticism of urban ethnography has been that work in this subfield tends to conflate behaviors with values, beliefs, and attitudes. Additionally, urban ethnography tends to examine its subjects "as passive reactors to... potentially debilitating outside social and economic forces, or as violent-prone individuals who mindlessly lash out at the world with hostility and aggression" (2004:5). To remedy this, Young conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 26 poor black men from the housing projects of Chicago's west side. Young focuses on how these men understand their social location and future life chances. In this way, Young illustrates these men's agency as makers of meaning.

I build on this new approach to culture and poverty in my study of green economic development in Chicago. Like Young, I provide a "bottom-up" view of the experience of sustainability and the distribution of benefits in the new green economy, by focusing on the trainees in green jobs training programs and the participants in community-based greening initiatives. Greencorps Chicago is considered a "transitional jobs training program" in the workforce development sector. That means that trainees face significant barriers to entry into the workforce as they can legally be discriminated against for having a felony on their legal record. While people recently released from prison are the primary subjects of such programs, in practice, "the barriers to entry" are

interpreted more broadly to also include people who have been unemployed for long periods of time and have little work history to show employers, as well as people who did not graduate high school. Still, the majority of participants in this program have been incarcerated and have at least one felony conviction. Likewise, Growing Power, Inc., is intended to benefit residents of Chicago's west side, mostly poor black people, in creating community food systems which they hope will create economic opportunities for residents and provide them with healthy, locally produced foods.

Answering these questions require an understanding of the experience of sustainability as well as the environmental and economic benefits of such initiatives. All too often, the measurement and definition of such benefits are based on middle class values. By applying the lessons of recent scholarship looking at the intersection of culture and poverty, the conceptions of economic and environmental benefits should be viewed as empirical questions. In terms of economic benefits, the middle class seems to value high-prestige and high-paying jobs that require a college education. However, research shows that these things are not always held in equally high-esteem or considered as important for many people in the working and lower classes (Lamont 2000). Often, this is due to people having realistic expectations of their economic mobility—realizing that their wage-potential is limited—and therefore prioritizing respect and, for the working poor, less-strenuous work as they often only earn minimum wage.

Likewise, it is also important not to assume what poor people view as the environment and, therefore, what they view as beneficial to their physical surroundings. To many poor urban people, urban open spaces and green spaces in the form of public parks are places to socialize and play team sports; in the form of wooded or “wild”

spaces, they are often viewed as dangerous or hazardous. This differs from the views of white middle class professionals that are looking for respite from the noise of the city and the traffic of commerce or simply enjoy knowing that there is a parcel of land within the city that excludes humans. The recent community garden movement has tested many of these perspectives and has seen a wide diversity of outcomes with regards to community involvement. Even organizations such as Growing Power are experiencing difficulties in getting members from the immediate communities involved. Few adults matching the neighborhood's predominant demographics participate, most likely due to the work being volunteer work and negative class connotations associated with 'working in the dirt' (even more so in areas where the soil is contaminated or the ground covered in litter). Where they have been successful is involving youth by offering a wide variety of programming, events, and activities, and stipends for interns.

Understanding how the urban poor experience sustainability initiatives is central to avoiding the pitfalls of patronizing policy and programming. Furthermore, there is the likelihood of rebuilding the world that may be sustainable in the eyes of a few, but not something that the urban poor choose not to take part of since it fails to meet their needs and desires or they do not feel welcome participating in it since it does not reflect their experience. To remedy this, I draw insights from urban political ecology. Urban political ecologists (Smith 2010 [1984]; Harvey 1996; Castree and Braun 2001; Keil 2003, 2005) argue that nature and society are co-produced, as opposed to independent and inherent phenomena. Analysts have examined how power relations influence who has access to resources, the quality of those resources, and how those resources are used (see Swyngedouw 2004). According to Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003: 898), "The political

program... of urban political ecology is to enhance the democratic content of socioenvironmental construction by identifying the strategies through which a more equitable distribution of social power and a more inclusive mode of environmental production can be achieved.” That is to say that our ‘environment,’ however a community may define it, is not pre-existing, but is reproduced through our everyday actions. Urban political ecology then seeks to draw attention to the processes that create our social and physical surroundings and develop strategies for popular participation.

Urban ethnography can offer insights into how people define and experience their social and physical surroundings to urban political ecology. The subfield is heavily Marxist and demonstrates the pitfalls found in their analysis of culture—often as something that is simply the product of structural conditions. In this sense, the critiques of Small, Lamont, and Young of urban ethnography apply to urban political ecology’s use of spatial and political-economic analysis, that is it perpetuates assumptions as to the “best uses” of such space for locals (see Heynen, Perkins, and Roy 2006). Moreover, historically, political ecology has been focused on struggles over land. Yet in contemporary efforts to green urban areas, access to land is one of many possible outcomes and is best viewed as an empirical question in itself: Is access to land what the urban poor desire? Do the urban poor want to grow their own food and practice urban-homesteading? Or could access to land have some other possible meaning? For example, Growing Power Chicago is looking for long term access to public lands for farmers and organizations; they are not looking to acquire land for private ownership.

For this reason, the analysis of the distribution of benefits of the greening of Chicago should start with the perspective of those “at the bottom,” since technocrats,

politicians and civil society have promised will be beneficiaries of sustainable development. This perspective necessitates understanding their social world and how they perceive it. Returning to the work of Young (2004), many of his findings are reflected in my work, but with some key differences that can be linked to the differences in the groups of people with whom we talk. Young interviews 26 people from housing projects on the west side of Chicago. The common thread in amongst the people I interviewed was that they all participated in a city-run green jobs training program. Since the program is considered a 'transitional jobs training program,' about 90% of the people I spoke with were black males with a felony conviction. However, there were also a handful of black women and white men. While the program was located on the west side of Chicago, close to the remnants of the projects that Young looked at, the people I spoke with were predominantly from the historically poor and black parts of Chicago, the south and west sides. However, a few of the people I interviewed lived on the near north side and the far north side of the city. Additionally, many of them grew up in housing projects, but some did not. Finally, they had varying degrees of previous work experience—from none at all to having a long and stable work history until their imprisonment.

The Meaning of "Outside"

One of Young's early points in his book is that idleness, due to unemployment and the lack of opportunities for other types of social engagement, can lead to crime. According to Young (2004: 38), "Being without work means that schedules and routines are not the norm. Instead, the everyday means continuous efforts at 'trying to stay busy' ..." In attempting to pass time, men in poor neighborhoods socialize in the street.

Another way to state this is to say that idleness could lead to trouble for these young men. Of the men I interviewed, many had changed their habits of socialization in order to avoid being on the streets. Even though they avoided idleness by working four days per week, they were still concerned about their weekends (which included Mondays) and their unpaid two weeks of time off around Christmas and New Year's Day. None of the men I talked to wanted to return to prison. However, their fear was that they might "catch a case" by being mistaken for someone else or through trumped up charges—it was not because they believed that they would return to a life a crime. Instead, they avoided the streets in order to not get caught in the middle of anything. Many of the men told stories of being mistaken for someone else by both the police and gang members in their neighborhoods, or just being the victims of profiling.

T-Bone, 36, was a 2010 graduate of Greencorps Chicago who returned for the 2011 class as a crew supervisor. Like many of the other trainees and graduates of the program, he had spent a few years in prison and was intent on not returning. When I asked him about talking to his neighbors about things he had learned in Greencorps, he told me, "I don't go outside... So I try to like stay away from the streets, so I don't want to be outside." T-Bone spoke to the dangers of "the streets" immediately outside his door. T-Bone was also the only trainee that I saw riding a bike to work when the weather was nice. However, within a few weeks he quit riding his bike after being stopped by police multiple times and eventually being late to work because of it.

Patrick and Marvell also spoke of staying indoors as a strategy to stay out of trouble. Patrick avoided leaving his house at night so as not to spend money at bars or on gambling on the street. Marvell also stuck close to home and family. After recounting a

time he was stabbed at a club on New Year's Eve one year, he swore off going to clubs and bars when he got out of jail. Self-isolation due to fear of "catching a case" is another aspect of social isolation related to poverty. When I asked T-Bone if he ever went, now or as a child, to see Lake Michigan or parts of Chicago other than the Westside, he answered:

"I stick around the neighborhood. Like right now, today, I don't know anything about down south, the Southside of Chicago. There ain't no need for me to go out there. I don't know nothing out there... Right now, today, I still don't care. I'm alright. It's just right now, there's really not much going on out there. I mean, I'm much older now and everybody looks like somebody. I mean, it goes on out west too, but I don't want to go down south and get it because I know I never been out there. So don't mistake me for somebody out here when I ain't never been out here. So I just don't go.... People get mistaken for somebody else. "You look like Larry.' I'm not Larry. I'm not even from out here. I don't need to be arguing and debating about me being from out there."

A fear of mistaken identity and past experience of being held in custody by police for no other reason than he looked suspicious ensured that T-Bone did not spend time outdoors after arriving home from work: "I leave here and I go straight home. I think I've been there and done that already and I'm seeing where the streets can lead you. And it's nowhere. I mean, like, what my so-called friends do outside—I can do that by myself. I can do that in the house... to be like that, just waiting for somebody to come by and lock me up or waiting for somebody to come by and do a drive-by, that's what you outside standing around for. I don't care, I'm going in the house."

Of the people I interviewed, Tim was the only one who spoke of going to visit other parts of town. During his youth, for the most part, he stayed on the Southside near the projects he grew up in, the Robert Taylor Homes. However, looking for adventure, he would travel with groups of friends to the north side in order to shoplift from corner stores. They only did this on the more affluent north side and never on the west side since they were more afraid of trouble on the west side. At the age of 15, Tim was sentenced to 40 years for armed robbery. He served 20 years, much more than any of his colleagues at Greencorps. During that time in prison, Tim converted to Islam. He credits his religious practice with “staying straight,” wanting to experience new things, and the confidence to be mobile to search those things out:

“People don’t go outside their neighborhood. I know some people to this day that never stepped downtown. I asked my little niece, ‘You ever been to Millennium Park, yet?’ And she be like, ‘No.’ So I’m going to take them this year... Yeah, in the summer time I go downtown. I love going down there. It’s beautiful... You get to see different people on the corner playing music, some people singing, and this man got his little stand and he got puppets! You get to see different people.”

Many Greencorps participants stated that they liked the program because it took them to many different parts of the city, for a legitimate reason: work. They arrive at their destination in large pickup trucks with their work crews wearing high-visibility safety vests with the Greencorps logo, and usually someone is handling some sort of power equipment. Instead of being perceived as suspicious, when they enter into most neighborhoods residents are curious about what they are going to do, and appreciative by

the time they leave. According to Tim, “Most of the guys like it because you getting to see other parts of the town: north side, east side, west side. You know what I mean. All we know is the west side and the south side. You go north and ‘Aw, man, I ain’t never been here.’”

Many of the Greencorps participants who reside on the south and west sides of Chicago endure severe social and geographic isolation. Unlike, say, the farm manager of the Chicago Honey Co-op, Greencorps participants do not enjoy the same mobility, often in terms of leaving ‘the block,’ but sometimes even in terms of leaving their house. This is largely due to fear of violence and fear of police harassment, both having the potential to turn into a parole violation and, therefore, a return to prison. Greencorps provides participants with the ability to see the city, many neighborhoods for the first time, and sometimes even parts of a participant’s neighborhood that he had previously avoided.

New Ties

For Anthony, the most important part of Greencorps is building new relationships which help him to break the ties with past acquaintances who he may have gotten in trouble with: “As far as the job goes, my favorite part is meeting new people. Surrounding myself with different people, cause it’s like I never really got involved with meeting new people. I always stuck with people around my neighborhood.” Anthony went on to explain that this includes the staff members who help him through the SAFER foundation, the other men and women he works with, and the organizers of community gardens which they work with.

Positive interactions with the older women who were community garden organizers is often mentioned by trainees, in particular sites at 46th & Vincennes and at

the North Park Nature Center where Greencorps trainees were building raised bed gardens, patios, and performing trail and flower bed maintenance. Almost every trainee had been to both sites since they each had multi-day projects that Greencorps helped out with. Each time the neighborhood women who were volunteering at the site and overseeing the work with Greencorps, fed the trainees. The food came up often in my interviews as a time that trainees appreciated the gratitude shown to them by the women at the gardens. According to Chuck, “You go to those job sites and you see all those sweet little old ladies tending those gardens, man. And they put in a lot of time keeping those gardens up, and we just come in there and give, and put the bulbs down, and the mulch and stuff like that, and just help with this and that. And you get to meet and greet these people...”

Indeed, trainees made many references to the opportunity to help others as making this job worthwhile. Most of the men at Greencorps express remorse about what they did that led to their incarceration. Likewise, their interaction with SAFER Foundation staff is filled with motivational interviews, speeches, and activities where they are encouraged to show that they have “turned over a new leaf” in order to overcome the stigma of being an ex-felon. Similarly, Greencorps staff share a narrative about trainees’ lives that says that trainees now relish the opportunity to be a benefit to their community, as opposed to the past when they were a detriment. In contrast to Smith (2007), who found that poor black people held steadfast to a belief in individualism and personal responsibility which hindered their willingness to mobilize their social networks in order to find work and was a cause of unemployment, Greencorps participants, such as Tim, emphasized a symbiotic view of their training: “This program helping a lot of

people on both sides of the fence. We go into the community, we putting things in the community, and they're giving young guys and older guys that want to work the opportunity to do something they lost."

"Helping others" was a significant theme in the interviews. There is little research on black, urban poor and a desire to help others, perhaps due to the focus on economic survival as opposed to people desires and other possible psychic benefits of employment. According to many Greencorps participants, the *opportunity* to help others was a primary factor when it came to what they valued about the program. In his explanation of what the program does, Tavaris narrows in on how the program helps people in the community by harkening back to the women organizing community gardens: "We get up, you know, and we help people. I love helping people. Like when their weeds and all that get out of control, we come in and take care of that. Like weatherization—I like going into people's homes and helping them out. When we do the distribution of plants and get out bulbs and all that, I like that. We helping them out. We help the community. That's what we do."

Shawn also emphasizes how they help people who may not have access to resources when he says, "These people that don't have the help or the resources to have things done in their community, and we're like guardian angels when we come through there and do these things and they just be so happy when they see us and the truck pull up. You know, they're very appreciative of your services, so I feel like if I can make a difference in a community, I feel like I've done my job." According to Patrick, the most immediate and significant way that they help people is by saving them money by making their homes energy efficient: "We helping people now, by helping people save money

and use less energy like the HEET [Home Energy Efficiency Training] thing we going through now.”

Work and Pay

Despite earning minimum wage while participating in the training program, the steady income was viewed as a significant economic benefit. While many participants were not happy with the low pay, they were all grateful for the steady income as well as the opportunity to earn multiple industry-standard certifications while getting paid. Most of the participants also wished that the length of the program would be extended so that they could garner more experience and practice their skills. Initially, I thought that this might be because they were anxious to begin their job search, but many of the participants that I interviewed believed that they had jobs lined up upon completion of the program, or they believed that there were ample jobs available. Therefore, the perceived short term economic benefits of green economic development in Chicago from those “at the bottom” looks to be minimal: a job and a steady paycheck for the time being and increased earning potential in an undesignated future.

The economic benefits look to be secondary to the social and environmental benefits experienced through participation in the green jobs training program. The environmental benefits of green jobs training, according to participants, largely revolves around the reprieve from social isolation afforded by the opportunity to work. Instead of being restricted to their neighborhoods or even just their homes, green jobs training programs allow them different ways to experience socio-nature, or the greening of the city, by helping others make beautiful things such as community gardens with patios and art installations, maintaining parks and bike trails for recreation, and even helping people

save money by retrofitting their homes. By helping people, trainees are garnering the respect that they seek and rarely find through traditional low-wage employment and from community suspicion that often weighs on them when they are simply seen being on the streets, even if they are just passing through on a bike. Finally, they feel like they are part of something.

These findings have a lot to say regarding the political program of political ecology. Green jobs training programs break down the barriers of social isolation, engender the feeling of respect necessary to participate, and provide an economic baseline to make such participation possible. These programs are limited in terms of how many people they can enroll and the length of the program is limited. Program graduates are thus largely left to the whims of the private sector that has less emphasis on the public good than did a city-sponsored green jobs training program. The Evergreen Cooperatives of Cleveland, Ohio might provide a better model for job training and the following incorporation of graduates into collectively-run, green enterprises. The Evergreen model provides the jobs necessary to break social isolation, the dignity of having a voice in one's own workplace, and connects to the market for ecological services and production practices.

Benefits of Sustainability

In comparing the experience of urban sustainability initiatives between black, low-wage earning job trainees and white, college-educated volunteers and entrepreneurs we see both significant common ground as well as stark differences. Starting with the category with the most common ground, the perceived benefits of participation, we see that both groups value the idea that through their involvement that they are helping

others, meeting new people, and the respect they feel they receive for their involvement. However, it is important to recognize that each of these things has different meanings dependent upon the social location of the group. For example, the participation of white, middle class volunteers in such sustainability efforts as a community garden are often viewed as altruistic. At the same time, similar participation from poor, black people may be viewed as necessity since poor people are typically seen as simply reacting to their surroundings. Rarely, are the actions of poor people viewed in terms of idealism, civic pride, or community.

Similarly, the conception of placing value in meeting new people is very different. Professional classes often view expanding social networks as creating new contacts with the potential to one day call on them in order to receive some sort of assistance. For the poor black men involved in these sustainability efforts, such networking is a way to resist isolation. Rarely, do they have expectations of any future assistance. Instead, meeting new people is much more about the immediate sociality and recognition. With jobs fairs being an obvious exception, Greencorps participants did not ask for someone's personal information nor did they develop databases of all of the people they contacted.

The concept of recognition is closely related to the respect participants felt they received for their involvement. The recognition that they sought was simply for the work they did, the visible improvements that they created. That is not to say that these men would not happily receive some sort of award or that they did not take pictures with their cell phones and proudly show them to their family. However, I would argue that white volunteers also seek respect and recognition for sacrificing their time and their own

personal benefit. Similarly, entrepreneurs seek that recognition for their ‘risk-taking,’ which is then magnified if they do create jobs for others.

Clearly, volunteers do not seek short term economic benefits from their participation, except for the possibility of furthering a professional network or eventually gaining employment with the organization for whom they volunteer. Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, are motivated by profit to varying degrees. Sometimes this takes the shape of translating various sustainable practices to the mainstream and sometimes it is done by seeking to meet the needs of a niche market. In contrast, the economic benefits that Greencorps participants value are minimal: a steady paycheck and finding a job with the potential for upward mobility. Here, nobody is thinking that they can get rich or that they will become famous. Indeed, most simply want to contribute to their family’s financial situation. No one that I spoke with ever expressed the idea that they would be the sole breadwinner in their family.

The primary environmental benefit experienced by Greencorps participants was overcoming geographic isolation. While many would still stay indoors once they returned home from work, during the work day they were able to see many parts of Chicago. Some of the men even talked about seeing parts of their neighborhood that they would have not otherwise gone to or did not know about. White, middle class participants do not suffer from isolation (or at least a form of isolation that is deemed undesirable). Indeed, white people enjoy high levels of mobility and can even access violent neighborhoods in the name of gentrification and adventurism (i.e., ‘urban spelunking’ or poverty tourism). Or, perhaps a better comparison is the focus of white, middle class participants of sustainability initiatives on transforming post-industrial areas into wilderness, pastoral

nature, or agriculture, all representing some respite from the city. Some organizations, particularly Chicago's Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF), are attempting to create a dialogue about such sustainability initiatives by running tours through the southeast side of Chicago highlighting start-up 'green' businesses as well as opportunities for 'green industrialization' (Southeast Environmental Task Force, n.d.). During these tours, guides are openly critical of environmental initiatives that ignore the industrial history and existing physical capital of the region by remediating such areas and turning them into green spaces and gardens. According to the executive director of SETF, Peggy Salazar, what the south side of Chicago needs is jobs and the industrial buildings of the area should be repopulated with new businesses, particularly those in green industries.

The issue of green space is also linked to safety in poor urban communities. Besides helping participants 'stay off the streets,' there is another aspect to safety which participants thought of as valuable: green space maintenance. Many of the public spaces that Greencorps maintained in neighborhoods on the south and west sides of Chicago were manipulated in very specific ways, often prioritizing safety. For example, many weeks were spent at sites around the Major Taylor Trail—a multiuse trail that begins at 83rd Street and runs southeast through the majority black neighborhoods of the Southside to the city's south border at the Calumet Sag Channel—mowing grass and raising the height of tree branches in order to open up sight lines. The intent was to remove the possibility for criminal activity by eliminating hiding spaces for people who intended to do others harm. In order to do this, trees were often mangled or pruned beyond the recommended percentage of foliage which would cause the tree significant stress. Yet, at sites on the north side, tree and plant health was prioritized as was 'native'

appearance. Participants were taught these different maintenance methods through the Greencorps program.

Finally, in terms of neighborhood beautification, there are significant differences in aesthetics as it relates to greenery and landscaping. Greencorps participants overwhelmingly favored ornamental plantings, despite the fact that ornamental plants are often require a lot of energy to produce and maintain and are generally deemed 'unsustainable' by Greencorps staff who have been trained as ecological and native landscapers were members of the Midwest Ecological Landscaping Alliance. Ornamentals were described as in contrast to native plants. While Greencorps participants eventually learned the significance of native plants in ecological restoration efforts and the landscaping industry, they still thought that they looked like weeds, or something undesirable. For this reason, communities on the south and west sides eschewed many plans by Greencorps to do native plantings and heavily favored ornamental plantings, especially plants that would flower. In contrast, many sustainability efforts initiated by white, middle class people throughout Chicago heavily favor native plantings, particularly prairie grasses. This is partly due to their biological features including their hardiness, drought resistance, and erosion protecting properties. But with so little green space in many areas of the south and west sides of Chicago, these biological properties were not considered as important as the color provided by flowers by Greencorps participants.

	Job trainees, low-wage laborers	Middle class professionals/ initiators
Economic benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steady paycheck • Potential upward mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer, sacrifice • Entrepreneurial, risk-taking & profit-seeking
Social benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping others • Meeting new people • Respect and recognition 	<i>same</i>
Environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming geographic isolation • Neighborhood beautification: ornamental plantings • Public safety through green space maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming post-industrial areas to wilderness, pastoral nature, or agriculture (respite from the city) • Neighborhood beautification: native plantings

Conclusion

The work of Young (2004) and Small, et al. (2010), provide important insights which enable an understanding of how poor, black, urban men experience the environment, experience urban sustainable development, and make meaning through their participation. This is a vital and often overlooked approach to understanding urban sustainability and the prospects for healthy, democracy, and justice. Indeed, a fundamental principle of the U.S. environmental sociology is that sustainability and environmental justice are untenable when there is inequality. This is due to disparities in power and the limited ability of those less powerful to resist the disproportionate effects of environmental bads (see Čapek 1993; Brown and Ferguson 1995; Pellow 2007; Mohai and Sana 2007; Bullard and Wright 2012). However, there is a cultural element to

inequality, which is deeply intertwined with the material. This requires a ‘bottom-up’ understanding of the needs and desires of those who bear the brunt of uneven economic development. But not only is it important what people ‘at the bottom’ have and need, but it is also critical to achieving democracy and justice that they play a central role in shaping their environment and that they play a part in that process.

With that said, Greencorps Chicago has done well in terms of empowering participants to be a part of the process of improving their communities while simultaneously meeting some material needs. However, this is not what most urban sustainable development in Chicago looks like, engaging and benefitting the poor. Moreover, almost 400 people have matriculated through Greencorps Chicago since its inception. In terms of numbers, the impact of Greencorps Chicago is small in a city of 2.7 million people where nearly a quarter of those residents live below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau 2014).

One possible strategy to improve the impact of Greencorps on Chicago residents would be to develop capital that is somehow anchored in the communities that are most in need. Instead of pushing people into the private sector labor market upon completion of the program—where it is less likely that they find a job that pays well and allows them to ‘do good’—a better version of sustainable development would look to find ways to develop capital anchored to communities and controlled by these communities. In other cities, such as Cleveland this is being done through worker cooperatives, the Evergreen Cooperatives, where many of the services that these businesses provide and their customers are themselves anchored in Cleveland. In addition, these are for-profit businesses where workers decide what is to be done with profits, whether it is used to pay

employees dividends or whether it is reinvested in the business at the end of every fiscal year. In the following chapter, I look at a different model of sustainable development based in Chicago (and Milwaukee) and rooted in communities, Growing Power, Inc. However, Growing Power, is a non-profit community based organization that seeks to join issues of sustainability, resilience, and economic development for the communities where it is based.

CHAPTER FOUR

GROWING POWER, INC. AND GRASSROOTS INNOVATION:
PRIORITIZING INEQUALITY AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY

Over the last twenty years, scholars have been applying lessons from socio-technical systems and regime theory to explore the potential for a sustainable future. Today, this field is referred to as sustainability transitions or transition theory. Largely drawing from the lessons of innovation and socio-technical change, the field has historically examined how technological innovations and associated institutions have challenged dominant regimes as it pertains to the governance of commercial technologies. Primary to this are examinations of funding for research and development and the development of public policy that promotes such innovations.

When it comes to understanding systemic change in environmental sociology, there are three dominant approaches that are converging. All three seriously consider issues of peak oil and climate change and seek to address a transition to a low-carbon and sustainable future. All three demonstrate a multi-level analysis. In U.S. sociology, the two primary research agendas include David Hess's (2007, 2009, 2012) examination of *alternative pathways* in science and technology in the political field of energy production and the influence of countervailing alternative energy industries; and, the *New Economics* approach primarily associated with the work of Juliet Schor (2010, 2011) and Gar Alperovitz (2006, 2011, 2013) whose strength lies in a critique of political economy but, especially, the policies that necessitate economic expansion and endless growth. The third approach, which overlaps with both the sociotechnical transitions of Hess and the sustainable consumption of Schor, is that of *grassroots innovations for sustainability*

largely developed by Gill Seyfang and Adrian Smith. Seyfang and Smith primarily explore the potential for civil society to be the basis of sustainability innovations that challenge structural barriers to a transition to a low-carbon society.

All three agree that at the very least a sustainable society should provide benefits to everyone, *ex post facto*. Beyond the proposition that the environmental benefits of a low-carbon economy will be shared by all because of reduced exposure to toxic pollution and waste, Hess proposes ensuring marginalized communities access to economic benefits through jobs training programs that focus on the growing clean energy sector—a vision first put forth by Van Jones and the organization Green For All (see, Jones 2009). Some of Hess's most recent work highlights the contested terrain of connecting sustainability policy with economic development in the United States. Here, Hess's focus is on political power, including the highly partisan state of affairs at the federal level which has steadily closed off opportunities for renewable energy industries and their challenge to the supremacy of oil. This is connected to party ideology and the industries and interests that represent and fund political parties and their campaigning (Hess 2013, 2014).

Schor argues that a shift away from the growth imperative in economic thinking will include a reduction of work hours and, therefore, a rise in employment. In tandem with increased access to sustainable consumption practices which have increasingly become the focus of the mainstream environmental movement will provide the impetus for a shift to a more sustainable future. Seyfang and Smith allude to struggles over power, but their empirical examples eschew contestation over sustainability. This is a product of their case studies, which focus on projects and movements in the UK and Commonwealth

countries who face less contestation from countervailing industries and can be the recipients of government support and funding. Fundamental to this government support, sustainability initiatives benefit from government funding for community food systems (Kirwin et al. 2013) and community energy systems (Seyfang et al. 2013). Furthermore, the more robust welfare provisions of these countries, compared to the United States, lessens economic, social, and environmental inequalities, as well as some of the challenges of the non-profit sector in securing funding in order to provide services or for developing outlets for building alternative power.

In all, the agenda of sustainability innovations scholars has maintained consistency since its inception in the early 2000s. That agenda considers: “whether and how grassroots innovators network with one another; the extent to which movements for grassroots innovation approaches exist and how they operate; whether and how innovations diffuse through processes of replication, scaling-up, and translation into more mainstream settings; and whether or not these developments represent the emergence of alternative pathways for sustainability” (Smith and Seyfang 2013: 2).

In this chapter, I will examine the case of Growing Power, Inc., a non-profit organization and land trust that provides people with jobs and training in vertical farming in efforts to develop accessible and community-based food systems. I will show how the sustainability transitions scholarship dismisses issues of economic viability, structural racism, and inequality as exogenous factors and, therefore, fails to account for otherwise ‘exemplary’ innovations of an organization such as Growing Power which uses such inequality as an impetus for innovation and sustainability. As I show, this is partly due to the different political-economic contexts of Growing Power, based in the United States,

versus the majority of case studies in sustainability transitions scholarship in the UK and other Commonwealth countries.

Sustainability Transitions

Sustainability transitions field builds on research in science and technology studies on the governance of sociotechnical systems. The term ‘sociotechnical’ connotes the embeddedness of technology in society, as opposed to the positivist view that technology and technological advancement operates on a plane independent of social institutions. This blend of structures and institutions—including, policy, science, technology, culture, and markets—connotes the dominant regime in sociotechnical systems. Science and technology studies scholars often point to such empirical examples as the development of the domestic electricity grid (Hess 2011). At first, electricity was predominantly used at night to provide light, but eventually industry began to produce appliances that would run during the day or even all day. This availability of appliances that would consume electricity throughout the day, or at times other than at night, generated cultural transformations that formed around new practices of appliance usage (Seyfang 2013 (NE Talk)). With this cultural transformation, the stability of the regime is strengthened as culture may become a variable that reinforces the other structures that constitute the regime.

In this way, scholars of sociotechnical change see future technological innovation as ‘path dependent,’ where new technologies and regime stability are co-produced. Seyfang (2012) uses this as evidence to support the assumption of sustainability transitions that views the possibility of regime change as only coming from outside of the regime, breaking the path dependency of co-productive technologies.

There are two related factors that transition theorists take into account when exploring systemic change. The first thing is *landscape development* or *landscape shift*. This refers to anything that puts pressure on the system and limits its ability to reproduce itself. This is typically understood to be something exogenous to the regime and often comes in the form of limited resources available for the regime to continue its trajectory due to macroeconomic trends, divergent cultural patterns, or geopolitical developments.

The second factor is groups of people who are operating outside of the regime in what are referred to as *niches*. These niches are ‘protective spaces’ where alternative sociotechnical practices or projects are developed and where alternative knowledge and values are fostered (Seyfang and Smith 2007). Niches usually develop in combination with landscape pressures being placed on a regime, creating opportunities or needs which civil society then attempts to address. The niche itself is made up of actors developing innovative projects as well as intermediary organizations that connect projects to other projects as well as connect projects to the mainstream. Niches include the proponents of grassroots innovations who inform and disseminate best practices, standards, institutionalized learning, and help facilitate networking and lobbying. In this way, sustainability transitions posits a multilevel perspective incorporating micro-level actors and macro-level structures and systems.

Research in the field of sustainability transitions predominantly examines niches and small, local level projects including grassroots sustainable energy production (Hargraves 2011; Hielscher et al. 2012; Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012; Hargraves et al. 2013; Seyfang et al. 2013), Earthships (Smith 2006; Seyfang 2009; Smith and Seyfang 2013), eco-housing (Smith 2007; Seyfang 2010), food localization (Seyfang 2006;

Seyfang 2007; Seyfang 2008; Kirwin et al. 2013), organic food (Smith 2007), Transition Towns (Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012), and community currencies and time banks (Seyfang 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006). These projects are boiled down to four categories of niches that the literature focuses on: energy, housing, food, and money & exchange.

Sustainability transitions research integrates the multiple levels of landscape, regime, niche, and projects through the concept of *governance*. The governance of sustainability transitions examines social processes, gleaning many concepts from organizational sociology, particularly diffusion and translation. Borrowing from innovation studies, sustainability transitions applies the conceptual tools of strategic niche management, which typically examines technological innovations and market-based niches, to the grassroots innovations of civil society (Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012). The concept of diffusion is applied to the internal processes of developing a robust niche. In strategic niche management this includes three things: managing expectations of participants and observers, supporting networking activities, and developing learning processes. Managing expectations refers to how niches present themselves to the wider public and whether they live up to their promises. In terms of niche emergence, Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012: 384) argue that it is best if expectations are “widely shared, specific, realistic and achievable.” Networking refers to engaging multiple stakeholders so that a wider array of resources can be engaged to support niche growth. Finally, learning refers to developing expertise among niche actors and disseminating the knowledge produced from projects. Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012: 384) also argue for “second-order learning” which would enable people to question and critique the existing regime.

Externally, niches are looking to influence the regime. Strategic niche management suggest three ways that niches can do that including replication, scaling up, and translation. First, replication refers to expanding the availability of knowledge and resources for similar projects to emerge in other locales and bringing change through the cumulative impact of multiple smaller projects. Another method to impact regime is for a niche to scale up in order to include increasing numbers of participants and enable more people to enjoy the benefits of sustainability. Finally, intermediary organizations can help the facilitation of niche innovations and ideas be translated into the mainstream. Intermediary organizations often are the primary way that collective projects interface with government.

In a normative analysis of the Transition Towns movement in the U.K., Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) employ strategic niche management in order to develop political prescriptions for the movement. By conducting surveys with Transition Town activists, Seyfang and Haxeltine analyze the niche development process and the challenges the Transition Town movement faces in the U.K. What they found in the U.K. context was that the Transition Town movement was successful at replicating the model of community-led projects. However, Transition Towns organizations in the U.K. were struggling to scale up and become more inclusive. Seyfang and Haxeltine deemed it too early in the development of the movement to judge whether or not the Transition Town movement in the U.K. was successful with translation. Similarly, niche development processes produced mixed results where networking and the internal knowledge production were judged to be strong, yet management of expectations was problematic. Seyfang and Haxeltine provide suggestions for developing shared visions in order to

foster realistic and achievable expectations. Additionally, they suggest Transition Towns in the U.K. to concentrate on external networking in order to broaden the appeal to people who do not consider themselves environmentalists. Finally, they argue that there need to be more opportunities for experiential learning as many Transition Town organizations focus too heavily on presentations and discussion forums as opposed to helping people develop skills and expertise in some of the basic practices of sustainability including green building and design and permaculture.

Strategic niche management is viewed as a necessary but insufficient condition for the diffusion, and eventual translation to regime, of grassroots innovations according to Seyfang et al. (2013:4). The sustainability transitions literature borrows from the phases in the development and trajectory of shared technological knowledge developed by Geels and Deuten (2006: 269) This starts with local practices and projects developing independently in the local phase. The following interlocal phase sees these independent projects begin to discover one another and connect to one another, sharing knowledge and experiences. At the interlocal level the niche begins to emerge. At this point, a successful niche will become more institutionalized where local knowledge and learning are aggregated at an increasingly cosmopolitan scale. Finally, the niche becomes robust enough where it helps to coordinate existing and new local projects and begins to influence the regime.

However, this phased model of niche development has been criticized as being too abstract, unable to account for the plurality of projects and the heterogeneity of niches and regimes. Indeed, Seyfang, et al (2013: 25) argue that with regards to community energy development, it is intermediary actors who are aggregating knowledge and

distributing resources as opposed to niche actors. In this way, they adapt the model to include projects interacting with multiple niche and intermediary actors. In their analysis of community energy projects in the U.K., Seyfang et al. identify the sector as exhibiting the qualities of the interlocal phase: intermediary organizations are in their infancy, while linkages between projects and the one-to-one sharing of knowledge play a much more crucial role in their success.

As the prevalence of sustainability transitions and grassroots innovations have spread, scholars have challenged the narrow focus on strategic niche management by incorporating lessons from social practice theory and new social movement theory. For example, Shove and Walker (2010) examine the emergence (and disappearance) of everyday sustainable practices, specifically showering and hygiene habits and the use of public transportation. According to them, the concentration on niche management focuses too heavily on systems of supply and misses out on opportunities to intervene with regards to demand. The focus on the 'elements' of practices effectively flattens the hierarchical conceptualization of the multi-level perspective, as the concentration on social practices emphasizes the flows of images, meanings and technologies between niches and regimes.

Shove and Walker (2010) use the example of London's vehicle congestion charging scheme to show that the emergence of sustainable practices and behaviors "are better understood as the emergent outcomes of a dynamic system of interacting and co-evolving practices than as the knowable products of policy intervention" (2010: 472). In essence, Shove and Walker argue that the idea of 'human needs' in sustainable development should not be taken at face value. Indeed, the goals of sustainable

development are contested. Therefore, the governance of sustainability transitions must take into account the roles of users and consumers in the emergence, disappearance and reproduction of sustainable and unsustainable practices. This would require a degree of 'reflexive governance' (VoB et al. 2006) where meanings are taken into account and there is a feedback loop to incorporate the co-evolution of changing meanings and changing environments. Smith et al. (2013: 8-9) attempt to address this by looking at the plurality of knowledges in the grassroots innovation process, specifically ethnographic knowledge at the local level and addressing local challenges. According to Smith et al., "Within these spaces, ethnographic knowledge is being created about the diversity of development situations and grassroots ingenuity, instrumental knowledge about potentially workable solutions can diffuse and transform contexts, and, finally, critical knowledge about limitations of grassroots innovation movements in isolation" (2013:9). In other words, grassroots innovations are not blueprints and do not provide prescribed policy and governance models. Indeed, much of the sustainability transitions literature emphasizes the experimental nature of niches where alternative sustainabilities are debated and refined (Smith and Seyfang 2013; White and Sterling 2013).

Combining this focus on meaning with the normative research agenda of sustainability transitions, Seyfang et al. (2013) have begun to engage new social movement theory. Indeed, many of the ideas and principals of niches such as the Transition Town movement can be traced back to the hippie counterculture of the 1970s. In sustainability transitions theory, the focus on innovations does not explain who joins such projects and why and how their participation impacts the project and the niche. New social movement theory, however, provides some conceptual tools that highlight the

dynamism of social movements, particularly processes of conflict and contestation, relationship building, and identity development. Moving away from material consumption and resource mobilization, Seyfang et al. show how the Transition Town movement connects “a diverse range of ‘alternative’ identities” (2013: 15). Despite the variety of interests, however, the majority of participants would fall under the rubric of middle class environmental activists. Therefore, new social movement concepts are being explored as possible tools to devising ways for niches to expand their appeal, possibly engaging with various forms of music, art, and culture.

Growing Power, Inc.

Growing Power, Inc. is a non-profit organization and land trust with the mission of increasing access to healthy, high-quality, affordable foods for all communities. In order to do this, Growing Power focuses on developing community food systems. To do so, Growing Power provides “hands-on training, on-the-ground demonstration, outreach and technical assistance... that help people grow, process, market and distribute food in a sustainable manner” (Growing Power, n.d.). The organization engages principals of food justice, particularly focusing on racial disparities with regards to access to safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate food, as a point of entry into addressing larger issues of racial and economic inequality.

The roots of Growing Power, Inc. go back to 1993 when the founder, Will Allen, purchased a small roadside stand and greenhouses on a 2-acre lot on the northwest side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The lot happened to be less than a half-mile from the largest public housing projects in the state of Wisconsin, Westlawn. Allen had played professional basketball had made a home just outside of Milwaukee when he decided to

retire. Following his brief stints in the N.B.A. and A.B.A., Allen continued to play professionally in Belgium, where he was inspired by the pastoral landscape and the fresh, healthy food available throughout the country. This allowed him to reconnect to his family's past as sharecroppers and tenant farmers in South Carolina and then Maryland, an existence that his family had tried to escape by moving north (Allen 2012).

Upon making Milwaukee his family's home in the late 1970s, Allen worked for KFC and Proctor & Gamble as he put his children through school, all the while trying to farm as much as he could on the side. During this time he was instrumental in creating opportunities for farmers of color in Southeast Wisconsin. He founded both the Rainbow Farmers Cooperative, a small-scale food producers cooperative, and was central to creating the producers cooperative which took over the Fondy Farmers Market (now the Fondy Food Center), a year-round commercial venue for producers, when the City of Milwaukee decided to sell it.

With the desire to be his own boss and farm full-time, Allen quit his job with Proctor & Gamble and cashed in his retirement savings in order to purchase the decrepit roadside stand. A local church congregation was also looking at the property as a tear-down, so Allen hurriedly worked with the bank and the city zoning committee to buy the property and ensure that it continued to be zoned agricultural—the last agriculture zoned parcel in the city of Milwaukee. While doing so, Allen talked to city officials about hiring local teens, which he admits in his autobiography was not a priority. Instead, his focus was on making the farm stand profitable. Allen writes: “I wanted to prove to everybody, not least myself, that a small farm stand working with small farmers and selling a diverse

array of produce to the inner city could be commercially viable for everyone involved” (2012: 114).

Within two years, Allen was struggling to pay the bills as well as his employees. It was at this time that a local YWCA youth group approached him looking for guidance on a project they wanted to start growing an organic garden and eventually selling the produce. Allen provided this group with space behind the greenhouses and assisted them in their efforts to grow food for their community. As the interest in the project grew, other schools and youth and community groups started contacting Allen. At this time, Allen began to re-imagine the farmstand and greenhouses as an educational space. He soon incorporated a non-profit organization, Farm-City Link, partly in an attempt to diversify his revenue streams with the intention of keeping the farmstand open. Allen hoped to charge schools and social service agencies for educational programming in horticulture. With the greenhouses, this could be done year round.

From 1995-1997 was an intense period of growth and innovation with Farm-City Link, which was the precursor to Growing Power, Inc. Farm-City Link innovations include the development of market baskets of fresh fruits and vegetables made affordable for low-income families, large scale vermicomposting, and aquaponics systems, which I discuss in more detail below. In 1996, the first year of Farm-City Link, Allen secured just \$10,000 in grant money, all from a local foundation. He hoped to increase that income to \$40,000 the following year, but this was not enough to pay his non-profit staff. Farm-City Link boardmembers encouraged him to develop a more structured youth program that focused on job training and transferable skills. In the meantime, Allen and Farm-City Link continued to get involved in various gardening and farming projects with youth,

getting some income by working with social service and state agencies doing youth development programming. However, funding from many of these programs proved fleeting.

In 1998, Allen met Hope Finkelstein through food justice activists in Wisconsin. Finkelstein, inspired by Troy Community Gardens in Madison, Wisconsin, had a vision for a multi-ethnic, multi-generational non-profit organization based in Madison that would transform the local food system, and then, she hoped, the model could spread nationally and internationally. Finkelstein called this non-profit Growing Power and asked Allen to be on the board of directors. Allen agreed. Overtime, it became clear to Allen that Finkelstein possessed many of the organizing and organizational skills that he lacked. Likewise, Finkelstein had difficulty finding a place for her organization. They soon decided that the roadside stand's greenhouses in Milwaukee would be the home of Growing Power. In 2000, they began to refer to the roadside stand as a 'community food center' inspired by the community art centers of the Federal Art Project of the New Deal era. They turned the first greenhouse into a classroom, the second housed the growing aquaponics systems, and the third greenhouse was a year round organic demonstration garden.

In July of 2000, Finkelstein told Allen that she would be moving to Alaska where her husband received a job offer. Allen's daughter, Erika, began to fill the void left by Finkelstein, writing grant proposals and conducting workshops of community project design. To do this, Erika Allen commuted from Chicago where she had been working with the Fourth Presbyterian Church to transform a decrepit basketball court adjacent to the Cabrini-Green housing projects into a community garden.

In 2002, Erika Allen became the director of Growing Power, Inc. projects in Chicago. Growing Power Chicago would eventually take over some projects that Allen spearheaded for other organizations and agencies, including the Chicago Lights Urban Farm in cooperation with the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago and the Grant Park “Art in the Farm” potager garden which has recently expanded to include a fragrance garden where youth grow aromatics and produce perfumes and other value-added goods. Other farms and gardens locations include Altgeld Gardens, Jackson Park, and Roosevelt Square. Finally, the centerpiece to Growing Power Chicago, which opened in 2010, is the Iron Street Farm which is a 7-acre former industrial site located on the south branch of the Chicago River adjacent to the Bridgeport and McKinley Park community areas. In total, Growing Power Chicago is now farming 12 acres in the city of Chicago.

Most of Growing Power Chicago’s efforts are in the youth employment and training. In 2012, Growing Power Chicago’s Chicago Youth Corps program employed 350 youth with the help of the City of Chicago’s After School Matters Program and with additional support from Heifer International (Growing Power, n.d.). Other programs include training and workshops for educators, beginning gardeners, and people who want to grow market gardens; anti-racism workshops; working with the city to create new farmers markets on the West Side of Chicago; and providing technical garden assistance to tens of other community organizations and non-profits throughout the city.

In the early stages, Growing Power often operated at a loss as Allen sought to provide jobs that also earned a living wage. By 2006, the outlook was beginning to improve as gross sales reached \$375,000 and grants and donations were nearly a million. However, expenses were still greater than income (Allen 2012: 200). In 2007, Allen

focused on controlling expenses, specifically energy bills which he was able to reduce by half thanks to solar power, a new boiler for the greenhouses, and the refinement of using heat produced by compost. 2007 was the first year that revenues exceeded expenses.

Coinciding with the expansion of Growing Power to Chicago, Will Allen began to receive nationwide and international recognition for his work. In 2005, Allen received a \$100,000 leadership grant from the Ford Foundation which Allen invested in the greenhouse facility. In 2008, Allen was named a MacArthur Fellow by the MacArthur Foundation which is often referred to as the 'genius grant' or the recipients are called a 'MacArthur genius.' This awarded Allen \$500,000 over a five-year period which he could choose to spend in whatever manner he deemed fit. Then in 2009, Allen received \$400,000 from the Kellogg Foundation with the charge to create jobs in urban agriculture. With this money, Allen was able to hire over 75 new staff to work on projects in Milwaukee.

In 2008, Growing Power began developing its regional outreach training center (ROTC) program. Inspired by a 2007 tour of the Deep South by Growing Power leadership, Allen saw the need many organizations had for the training in sustainable farming techniques that Growing Power had developed. Here, Growing Power partnered with 6 organizations in places throughout the United States and helped conduct weekend workshops as well as help build organizational capacity for many of the partner organizations. Some of the locations of regional training outreach centers included Louisville, Kentucky, Lynchburg, Virginia, Detroit, Michigan, and Taos, New Mexico. Later that year, a more intensive commercial urban agriculture program for the partner

organizations where they were asked to come for one long weekend per month for five months to receive more in-depth training in all of Growing Power's operations.

Making Grassroots Innovation Possible

Soon hereafter, Allen embarked on three innovations in urban agriculture which Growing Power is known for to this day. Allen was very interested in the community supported agriculture (CSA) model that was becoming increasingly popular in South Central and Southwest Wisconsin in the mid-1990s. CSA farms have consumers, or members, buy a share each season. Then, throughout the harvest, consumers receive a box, or a share, at standardized time intervals, which include a portion of the food that was harvested. If the farmers had a bad harvest, CSA boxes would reflect that with less produce and vice-versa. By having consumers pay upfront, the risk is shifted to the consumers. Allen wanted to apply this to the Northwest side of Milwaukee but figured that it was not feasible for poor people to pay a lump sum upfront. Furthermore, it would be difficult for many struggling families to endure the paucity of early-season harvests. Finally, unlike many middle class families, poor families did not have the same opportunities to work the farm to discount the price of their share since they did not have the leisure time or the ease of access to travel (Allen 2012: 117)

As an alternative, Allen developed what he called a "Market Basket." Allen's goal was to provide a weekly basket of twenty pounds of fruits and vegetables to low-income families for ten dollars. To do this, he asked his friends in the Rainbow Farmers Co-op to sell him anything excess that they had grown at a deep discount. Allen then supplemented this with apples, oranges, and peaches from a regional wholesaler. Moreover, he ensured

that everything was foodstamp eligible. This continues to be a staple of Growing Power's community outreach and food distribution efforts.

The next major sustainable innovation, following closely on the heels of the market basket, was the development of Growing Power's large scale vermicomposting method. This project was spurred by a staff member of Heifer International, Alison Meares Cohen, based in Chicago. Typically, Heifer International focuses on international development projects that focus on livestock. In 1996, Heifer International received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to develop urban agriculture projects in the United States. Heifer leadership decided that these projects must also have livestock, however, they continued to run into municipal laws and codes that hindered the development of such projects. For example, keeping goats and chickens in a city is against many cities' municipal code. While in discussions with the USDA, Cohen discovered that the agency considered worms to be livestock. Cohen then began to work with 'worm farmers' and vermicomposters throughout the upper Midwest, learning their methods (Allen 2012: 118). She found many of these vermicomposters using red wigglers to turn food scraps and newspapers into worm castings, a potent fertilizer containing many nutrients and beneficial bacteria. Later, Allen would find that his worm compost would have 14 times the beneficial bacteria of the soil on his farm, and that bacteria would help 'fix' nitrogen from the air which would then be used by the plants as energy (Allen 2012: 120).

When Cohen approached Allen about developing a project, Allen was initially hesitant. Eventually, Allen agreed to work with Cohen to develop a program teaching vermicomposting to teens. Cohen then secured \$50,000 in funding from Heifer to make it

happen. Within two weeks of the start of the program, many of the worms began to die.

Allen and the teens struggled to find the right mix of organic material and the correct amount of moisture. While this was happening, fruit flies began to thrive on the food scraps. Allen feared that the fruit flies would reach the retail space and repel customers. To remedy this, Allen began to reach out to farmer friends who advised him to let the fruit decay more so as to be less attractive to fruit flies.

With his next batch of worms, Allen decided to try experimenting with a different system and different inputs. He built a few two-by-four foot boxes out of wood and put his own compost in the bottom, then placed the worms on top, then he put decayed food scraps on top of the worms. This seemed to work as the worms began to multiply. Allen continued to test different types of food waste and measured their effectiveness according to how quickly they were eating by the worms and how much the exposed worms reproduced. Finally, he covered the bins with burlap sacks to protect the worms from light and to detract fruit flies.

Today, the worm composting continues and has been expanded and they produce hundreds of thousands of pounds of worm castings per year. Each box can produce 800 pounds of worm castings in a cycle. This is vital to improving the quality of their soil resources. Growing Power has refined the process to take approximately 12 weeks which includes collecting food scraps from restaurants and institutional facilities and allowing the food scraps to break down for a few weeks and then combining with other organic material such as woodchips and allowing the worms a few weeks to consume it (Growing Power, n.d.) Currently, there are approximately 50 bins operating at the Milwaukee headquarters and another 30 at the Iron Street Farm in Chicago. Together, they produce

enough fertilizer for all of their gardening and farming operations, and even have excess that they sell for retail. Worm castings are sold in 1, 2, 8, and 20 pound bags, while half pound mesh bags are being marketed as Milwaukee Black Gold Tea bags where gardeners add a gallon of water and let sit over night to make a liquid fertilizer. Allen estimates that each worm bin yields thousands of dollars in products each year (Allen 2012: 165)

At this point, Allen was still developing programs and making plans for Farm-City Link. The final innovation on which the eventual development of Growing Power would come was growing fish using an aquaponics system. Cohen's involvement in the budding urban agriculture movement brought her to the International Conference on Sustainable Urban Food Systems in 1997 in Toronto where she meet Johnathan Woods the proprietor of FoodShare, an urban farm located in a warehouse. Woods had been developing a fish system based on the work of a Canadian biologist named John Todd who was interesting in 'living machines.' Woods system was made up of three fifty-five gallon drums, PVC pipe, and an aquarium pump. In one barrel he had plants and algae. The water from this barrel would filter into a second barrel which contained 200 talapia. The third tank contained snails, bacteria and fungi which broke down the fish waste. Woods was invited to conduct a workshop with youth at Growing Power in Milwaukee. One week later, Growing Power was operating three living machines.

These primary innovations--the market baskets, vermicomposting, and living machines—have all been refined to varying degrees and have spurred further innovation. The living machines were eventually turned into full-scale aquaponics systems where the plants that filtered the water with the fish waste were able to be harvested on a

commercial scale. This included using tomatoes, bush beans, and water cress. Recently, the Growing Power headquarters have taken the aquaponics system a step further to making it self contained. The inputs that came from outside of Growing Power had been the fish and fish food. Today, Growing Power is developing their own fish food in the form of black soldier fly larvae which they have been able to grow in compost in hot houses.

Another innovation includes their adaption of hoop houses or high tunnels. Hoop houses are passive greenhouse systems that have a skeletal structure of lumber and piping and are covered in plastic. Land grant university extension services have long promoted these as a form of season extension for market gardening and to help farmers get a jump start on the growing season. Growing Power's major innovations with regard to hoop houses has been to develop a cheap blueprint where all the materials can be found at the local hardware store where materials can be purchased for less than \$1000. They have also shown this to be replicable and built hundreds of them in Chicago and Milwaukee as well as assisted organizations throughout the United States in building them.

With regard to the operation of hoop houses, Growing Power has developed their system so that hoop houses can actually be grown in year round even in Milwaukee's climate. To do this, Growing Power has experimented with using a mix of compost that produces a lot of heat that includes brewery waste (referred to as 'hot mix') which staff members use to line both the inside and outside of the hoop houses. This ensures that even on the coldest day of the year that the temperature in the hoop house never falls below 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Growing Power Chicago is able to grow hearty, leafy greens throughout the winter including Kale, Swiss Chard, and a variety of microgreens.

One final notable innovation, though not the last, is Growing Power's method of growing sunflower sprouts and pea shoots which are known to be nutrient dense including being high in protein, calcium, and vitamin D . In 2003, Allen invited a young man who was growing sprouts and shoots to conduct a workshop at Growing Power. The young man's method included planting seeds in shallow beds that consisted of top soil and peat moss. Each harvest took just over a week and he would cut just above the root. This allowed for the plant to grow again, and each planting could be harvested two to three times before the soil was depleted. According to Allen, the sprouts were "well suited as a cash-crop for my greenhouses. They could be cultivated year round, harvested frequently, and grown intensively" (Allen 2012: 190). This helped spark Allen's ideas of considering cubic footage and 'growing up' in urban farming as opposed to simply square footage. Allen adapted this method using the worm compost they created and coconut coir as replacement for peat moss which would mimic peat moss's ability to hold water. Allen sites the unsustainable harvesting of peat moss bogs and the ready availability of coconut coir which is often considered a waste product in most value-added production processes of coconuts (Allen 2012: 190).

Additional innovations include a rainwater catchment system that they developed with the help of a \$35,000 grant from Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District. The system catches rainwater from the greenhouse roofs and then is used in the fish systems and as a source of watering. Another innovation that is currently in the works is an anaerobic digester which could power the entire Milwaukee operation on the methane produced by food scraps.

Sustainability Transitions

According to the sustainability transitions literature, particularly the normative evaluation developed by Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012), Growing Power, Inc. can be understood as both exemplary. Growing Power is exemplary in that it is very successful in the diffusion and niche development that sustainable transitions scholars adapted from strategic niche management theory. Growing Power, Inc. can itself be considered a niche containing multiple projects “where new social infrastructure and institutions, value sets, and priorities are practiced in a value space which is distinct from mainstream society” (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012: 389).

Replication: In terms of diffusion of these social relations, values, and practices, Growing Power has been very successful at replicating its model and its projects on a nationwide scale. This is done through the regional training outreach centers throughout the United States, which Growing Power makes a commitment to building organizational capacity as well as transferring knowledge and skills. Throughout the years, the regional training outreach centers have shifted. For example, when an organization is able to use the regional training outreach center to reach its goals, it is often ‘rotated out’ of the program and other sites are established.

Scaling up: In comparison to most other organizations related to sustainability and producing grassroots innovations, Growing Power has scaled up rapidly. What is unique about Growing Power in this context is two-fold. First, Growing Power has successfully engaged and expanded with regards to a group that is not typically associated with many of the grassroots innovations that the sustainability transition literature examines: poor people, people of color, and people with barriers to entry to the

workforce. Second, and related, it does this primarily through employing adults with a living wage of \$15 per hour, or through a small, but not insignificant stipend, for youth.

Another aspect of this is through developing Chicago as a new hub of Growing Power activities. Currently, the Chicago programs of Growing Power employ 16 full time staff and provide employment and training to over 350 youth per year.

Translation: With regards to translation to the mainstream, there is lots of evidence pointing to Growing Power's success. For example, recently, Growing Power Milwaukee and Growing Power Chicago have established a relationship with their respective public school systems, selling produce to be used for lunches. To do this, Growing Power had to establish a relationship with a major institutional supplier. In this case, the institutional supplier was Sysco. Sysco cited the demand from the public and Milwaukee Public School officials for Growing Power produce to be distributed in schools. To do so, a meeting was set up between Allen and Sysco and a price was agreed upon (Allen 2012: page/).

Other indications of successful translation to the mainstream could be the success Growing Power has experienced securing significant funding from major foundations. As stated above, Allen received grants from the MacArthur Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. In 2011, Growing Power received a \$1 million donation from the Walmart Foundation's National Giving Program, much to the ire of environmental activists (Simon 2011). Finally, in 2012, Growing Power received an additional \$5 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg foundation to expand their community food centers idea.

In terms of Growing Power's relationship with municipal governments, the City of Milwaukee and Mayor Tom Barrett have shown strong support. They have done this by finding ways to provide Growing Power with low-cost, long term leases to city owned properties such as the five-acre plot at the Maple Tree School. Another example of this is the parking lot of a now-closed public school, Carleton Elementary, which now has 26 operating hoop houses on the parking lot and paved playground.

Other significant engagements with the public sector includes developing a sustainability curriculum for Milwaukee Public School students in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Fresh Water Sciences; organizing multiple, new farmers markets and farm stands each year; and partnering with the USDA to provide farmer training to refugee and historically disadvantaged groups.

Besides Sysco, Growing Power has a few other corporate partnerships, most notably one with the Kohl's Department Store's. While Kohl's does provide monetary support, the focus of this relations is on a garden that is maintained by Growing Power staff and Kohl's corporate employees on the Kohl's corporate campus in Menominee Falls, Wisconsin. Furthermore, Kohl's allows for a few paid workdays for employees at various Growing Power sites and human resources and marketing help to facilitate fundraising drives organized by employees. Growing Power also provides produce to the corporate campus dinning operations and uses the food waste. Finally, Kohl's also offers Growing Power Market Baskets to it's employees and hosts a weekly farmers market (Kohl's Cares n.d.).

Besides the heavy involvement in the expansion of farmers markets, in Chicago engagement with the public sector is slightly different. Growing Power secures much of

its funding for its Youth Corps program through the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services After School Matter's program which contracts with social service agencies and community organization to provide programming for Chicago Public School students. In 2012, this program served over 350 'at-risk' youth (Growing Power n.d.)

Additionally, Erika Allen's expertise and experience was highly sought after by the incoming Emanuel mayoral administration. Allen served on the mayor's transition team, on the Energy, Environment, and Public Space Committee. Prior to that, Allen was appointed by the Illinois Governor Pat Quinn to the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Council. Currently, Allen serves as a Board Commissioner for the Chicago Parks District, a City of Chicago delegate agency. Allen's close work with the Parks District over the years helped to foster this relationship, particularly with the gardens in Grant Park and the Jackson Park farm.

In terms of internal development and niche process management, Growing Power also proves to exceed expectation outlined by strategic niche management theory.

Expectations: According to niche management theory, "niche development is best supported if expectations about what the niche can deliver are widely shared, specific, realistic, and achievable" (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012: 390). Indeed, community planning is a significant aspect of every Growing Power project. According to Allen, community refers to a community of practice. While they are open to participation from just about anyone, Growing Power focuses on the needs and desires of those directly participating as opposed to a broader geographic community or community of interest. Visioning is done with those volunteers and staff members and Youth Corps participants at hand.

Moreover, Growing Power staff are intensively training in facilitating visioning processes and are provided the institutional support to do so through the appropriate materials, time, and space.

Second, since many of the employees and potential employees of Growing Power come from disadvantaged backgrounds, their expectations in terms of pay, status, meaningful work, and new opportunities are often exceeded. Many have very little chance to earn upwards of \$15 per hour anywhere else. Similarly, the stipend for youth is small but not insignificant to poor middle school and high school students. Also, staff are held in high esteem and clearly respected by many of the groups that come through Growing Power on tours or for trainings. Additionally, staff input is often sought by media and academic researchers. The work tends to be meaningful according to the low turnover rate, the sociality of the crews in which employees work, and the opportunities to specialize and develop an expertise, sometimes leading to opportunities to conduct workshops or train volunteers. For participants in the Youth Corps program, they are provided the instruction and support to build their own businesses which is how Growing Power diversified into hygiene and beauty products.

Finally, Growing Power is noted throughout the Chicago urban agriculture milieu as ‘getting things done.’ Part of this is due to the staff being unwilling to work with anyone who will slow down their projects with bureaucracy. This has earned Growing Power, at least in Chicago, a reputation for not being always being a great partner with other grassroots organizations. However, this may more be a function of prioritize their community and issues of racial justice since both Growing Power Milwaukee and Growing Power Chicago have had powerful collaborations with both Walnut Way and

the Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Renewable Living, respectively. Both of these organizations are people of color-led and share much of Growing Power's vision.

Additionally, in his autobiography, Will Allen clearly prioritizes practice, execution, and experimentation over research and planning. Allen uses the works of W.E.B. DuBois and George Washington Carver to construct a dichotomy between intellectual pursuits and practical skill development. In public talks, Erika Allen has stated that Growing Power Chicago simply goes ahead with its plans using the example of academics and urban farmers doubting the organization's abilities to grow food on concrete, in the case of the Urban Lights Farm. Another example was Growing Power Chicago's work to alter the municipal code to allow them to compost on a large scale. This policy work was done through the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC) which is organized, staffed and administered through Growing Power Chicago. The quick movement of CFPAC whose policy recommendations supported the large scale composting of Growing Power over the needs of small scale and individual producers in the Chicago urban agriculture milieu. These small producers, represented by Advocates for Urban Agriculture, could not work at the same speed to as CFPAC to develop their own policy recommendations. This caused a rift between Growing Power Chicago and many of the individual urban agriculture practitioners.

Networks: Growing Power has fostered networks at every scale for its staff, volunteers, and allies. These networks also attract new staff, volunteers, and allies, and provide opportunities to develop a wide variety of skills--from technical to community organizing to policy advocacy--and share knowledge. The most pronounced networking opportunities on the local level include the Milwaukee Food Policy Council (MFPC) and

the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council. The Milwaukee Food Policy Council includes a greater diversity of representation from various projects and organizations whereas CFPAC is more of an outlet for Growing Power Chicago volunteers who do not just want to do manual labor or want to do some sort of organization in addition to their manual voluntary labor. Both MFPC and CFPAC connect Growing Power staff, volunteers, and allies to other projects, and help to build capacity regarding local policy advocacy and movement strategy.

Growing Power also organizes national networking opportunities. Besides the regional outreach training centers, Growing Power also organizes the annual National-International Urban & Small Farm Conference and the Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative. The National-International Urban & Small Farm Conference is usually held at the Milwaukee County Fairgrounds, however in the fall of 2013 it was organized and hosted by one of the regional outreach training centers located in Taos, New Mexico. The conference annually hosts thousands of people, organizes nearly a hundred workshops, brings in a variety of vendors, and is heavily focused on the conviviality of shared meals. In Milwaukee in 2012, Sysco had a vendor table publicizing their relationship with Growing Power and the Milwaukee Public Schools. Likewise, Kohl's hosted a workshop explaining their relationship with Growing Power and providing advice to practitioners regarding how to best approach and build relationships with corporations. At the same time, organizations like Family Farm Defenders had workshops that brought into question Growing Power's relationships with Kohl's, Sysco, and Walmart. Other workshops highlighted aquaponics systems in Milwaukee Public Schools classrooms, youth organizing and engagement, and skillshares related to beekeeping, animal

husbandry, and hydroponics. These workshops were mainly performed by projects and organizations from around the country. Furthermore, Growing Power provided 500 participants with tours of their facilities including the headquarters, gardens at public schools, and some of their farms outside the city.

The Growing Food and Justice For All Initiative (GFJI) was co-founded by Erika Allen and is headquartered out of the Growing Power Chicago office. GFJI was borne out of the nationwide Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC). At the third annual conference of CFSC in 1999, an Outreach and Diversity Committee (ODC) was organized with the intention of developing a plan to diversify the racial and ethnic makeup of the coalition's membership. However, only three people out of 400 participants showed up, and they were all people of color. Four years later in 2003, the ODC emerged as an actual working group and had a steady membership of approximately 20 people. For next four years, the ODC developed an anti-racism stance, educated the coalition about racism in the food system, and pushed for an anti-racist agenda to be at the forefront of the CFSC. This created a wedge within CFSC and people who resisted adopting the anti-racist stance believed that it was beyond the purview of the organization's charge of working toward community food security. In 2007, the ODC broke off from the CFSC and created GFJI (GFJI n.d.). Allen credits this split with the eventual dissolution of CFSC in 2012 after a few years of waning activity and enthusiasm following the 2007 split (Allen 2012). Many of the regional chapters of GFJI, referred to as LEGs (Local Empowerment Groups), mirror the ROTCs. One of the most active LEGs is the Toronto Local Empowerment Group which includes members from organizations such as Afri-Can Basket, FoodShare, Green Thumbs Growing Kids, and academics at the

University of Toronto. GFJI includes its annual gathering and anti-racism training workshops as part of the annual National-International Small & Urban Farmers Conference. Additionally, they host multiple Intensive Leadership and Facilitation (ILFT) trainings throughout the year at Growing Power Chicago and at different LEGs. ILFT trainings are primarily anti-racist trainings and trainings for facilitating community visioning processes.

Learning: Growing Power, Inc. offers many learning opportunities for staff, volunteers, and allies. This includes many of the previous workshop, ROTC, and training activities previously mentioned such as ILFT and the Commercial Farmers Training. Additionally, volunteers often get hands-on training in the basics of Growing Power's organic agriculture methods, such as vermicomposting, hoop house construction, bed building, mushroom growing, and market preparation. Just about all of Growing Power's training includes hands-on activities for tactile learners, as well as 'second-order learning.' Second-order learning refers to a broader critique of inequality and the food system. This is most apparent in GFJI trainings which includes readings from the *Dismantling Racism* (Western States Center 2003) curriculum and the *Anti-Oppression Reader* (Global Exchange 2007), often followed by small group discussion.

Prioritizing Economic Viability

Compared to many of the other organizations and niches examined by sustainability transitions adherents, including grassroots sustainable energy production (Hargraves 2011; Hielscher et al. 2012; Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012; Hargraves et al. 2013; Seyfang et al. 2013), Earthships (Smith 2006; Seyfang 2009; Smith and Seyfang 2013), eco-housing (Smith 2007; Seyfang 2010), food localization (Seyfang 2006;

Seyfang 2007; Seyfang 2008; Kirwin et al. 2013), organic food (Smith 2007), Transition Towns (Seyfang and Haxeltine 2012), and community currencies and time banks (Seyfang 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006), Growing Power, Inc. appears to set the standard according to an evaluation based on strategic niche management theory. However, sustainability transitions theory fails to capture Growing Power's most important features, namely building power and challenging inequalities and injustice. Indeed, sustainability transitions theory does not tend to power and sees the transition to a sustainable society essentially as a problem of organization and education.

According to sustainability transitions theory, Growing Power, Inc. is wedged into the niche of alternative food systems. However, as Erika Allen says, "Growing Power uses food to highlight issues of injustice" (E. Allen 2013). In other words, sustainability or the challenges of climate change and peak oil are not the impetus for the emergence and development of Growing Power. For example, in public appearances Erika Allen often tells the story of when she joined the Post Carbon Institute as a Fellow. The Post Carbon Institute is a think tank that focuses on the impact of climate change and sustainability and has increasingly turned its focus on to resilience. Allen claims she was surprised by what she interpreted as apocalyptic views of a brutish future for humanity due to climate change expressed by many people in attendance at the first Post Carbon Institute conference she attended. To Erika Allen, such an apocalyptic future was the lived-present for many of the communities and youth she worked with on Chicago's South and West Sides (E. Allen 2013).

The inattention to power in the sustainability transitions work of Seyfang, Smith, and colleagues can be connected to the context in which their research is happening,

notably Northern and Western European countries (primarily the U.K.) and Australia. Overwhelmingly, these countries have less inequality than the United States and stronger welfare states. Moreover, these countries are much more amenable to such sustainable niches and often offer some sort of financial support when a niche shows promise to be scaled up. In the United States, equivalent niches enjoy very little of the support that they do in Europe and Australia. However, major American cities seem to be increasingly providing different types of support (see Hess et al. 2010), likely due to the devolution of responsibility for citizen well-being being pushed to the local or municipal level.

Hess draws attention to power struggles in transition theory, as it pertains to the U.S. Part of the failure of the US federal government in supporting niche development comes from active resistance to clean energy sectors from entrenched interests, particularly the fossil fuel industries (Hess 2012, 2013). According to Hess, “This political conflict plays itself out in various battles over regulatory and industrial policy, usually in the form of the incumbent industry in opposition to an alliance in support of an alternative pathway...” (Hess 2013: 849). Therefore, according to Hess, power is best understood in terms of political process.

However, the threat of countervailing industrial power does not apply to Growing Power, Inc. Indeed, the issue of countervailing power does not appear to apply to most niches encompassing grassroots innovations, except where the majority of niche actors are engaged in profit-making and *technological* innovation is a focus, such as in the case of wind and solar energy production. In this way, envisioning Growing Power as an actor struggling for position in a technological field provides little insight into the structural forces facing Growing Power and the work that Growing Power does to alter those

forces. The niche which Growing Power occupies, according to sustainable transitions theory, would be alternative food systems. In this niche, such countervailing power, as experienced by communities and individuals looking to install distributed solar as described by Hess (2013), does not exist. While many proposed Food and Drug Administration safety regulations, such as the Food Safety and Modernization Act, could have a harmful effect on small producers in terms of costs of implementation, historically, the FDA has worked directly with small and alternative producers to change standards, allow for their exemption, or ensure affordable implementation of food safety measures. Likewise, there is little evidence of industrial food producers pushing safety regulations as a means of squeezing out small and alternative producers. Although it may be a case where small and alternative producers and their advocates are well-organized.

Clearly, theories of sustainability transitions and grassroots innovation fail to capture the emergence and expansion of Growing Power. By seeking to redress systemic racism and inequality, Growing Power cannot be understood as an actor appropriating capital on a single plane. Indeed, it is Growing Power's willingness to operate across multiple fields, sometimes at the edges and sometimes at the center, which enables its 'success.' Through its many projects, Growing Power engages various sectors and institutions and it does so at multiple levels. As Will Allen states (2013: 222):

“All of these innovations at Growing Power came from relationships. I could not grow my compost without companies that were willing to provide organic waste to me. The work creating renewable energy required me to develop lasting partnerships with utilities and machine companies. I did not have a market for my products without building a reliable customer base at restaurants, cooperatives, and farmers market

throughout the city. Industrial farming has disrupted these kinds of relationships, and it has torn at the fabric of communities.”

In terms of sustainability transitions, it does not fit neatly into the understanding of ‘civil society’ embedded in the definition of grassroots innovation. In fact, both Will Allen and Erika Allen have stated that one of Growing Power’s goals is to be self-sustaining through sales of goods and services. In 2012, the first year that half of Growing Power’s operating costs were covered by such sales (Guidestar 2013), this was a much-celebrated achievement throughout the organization. In this way, Growing Power embraces the conception of an ‘enterprising non-profit.’ This is also a case where ‘non-profit’ is a misnomer as Growing Power seeks to make profit and then reinvest in the organization and community. Moreover, Growing Power provides ‘entrepreneurial agricultural training’ through their Commercial Urban Agriculture Training Program and seeks to incorporate such entrepreneurs and farmers into their community food system, if not work directly with them.

Likewise, Growing Power’s success cannot be explained by theories of strategic niche management. What this theoretical framework fails to capture is Growing Power economic significance and viability, particularly given their community. In the sustainability transitions literature, it can be inferred that sustainability largely refers to the natural world and humans’ ability to live within the boundaries for the natural world to reproduce itself and metabolize human impact. Therefore, sustainability transitions is not sustainable development and eschews talk of economics.

Growing Power’s focus is on economic viability for both the organization and the community. Granted the organization started small, trying to help people obtain fresh and

healthy food for low-cost, but today Growing Power is a significant employer on the Northwest Side of Milwaukee and among youth in Chicago. Whereas, Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) critiqued the Transition Town movement in the UK for ‘preaching to the choir’ or not attracting participants beyond people who already identified as middle-class environmental activists, Growing Power explicitly seeks to meet the economic and social needs of people outside of the mainstream environmental movement, mostly people who are poor and Black. They do this by providing everything from basic needs such as food to entry level jobs that pay a living wage and have prospects for advancement. Transition Towns, like most other grassroots innovations, tend to be volunteer based seeking to reap the benefits of retired professionals, hence the term ‘the retired engineer effect,’ which is often found in the renewable energy niche (Seyfang 2013). In the sustainability transitions literature, economic viability is an afterthought until the process of translation where grassroots innovations are made commercially viable and taken up in the mainstream. Meeting a community’s need for jobs or material goods is not one of the criteria for strategic niche management. In contrast, the criteria of ‘managing expectations’ in strategic niche management may be read as preparing people for the inability of grassroots innovations to meet such economic needs.

In her talk for the 2014 Food Growing Summit, Erika Allen repeatedly returned to the issue of economic development: “The main things right now are food production and food sovereignty through economic development. ... When we talk about food justice it really is about empowering people to be economically [sovereign]... having a living wage farm job or food related job. ... I want people to have good jobs, have access to good food and be stabilized to push against some of the other social pressures. And in

America we don't have those things in place" (E. Allen 2014). Along these lines, Erika Allen emphasized the necessity of Growing Power being an economically viable enterprise. According to Allen, this requires productivity; at Growing Power, there is no room for leisurely gardening since jobs and access to food is on the line.

Finally, Growing Power's focus on economic development also draws scorn from other actors in the field of sustainability. Indeed, their focus on generating economic benefits specifically for the communities that Growing Power works with, has contributed to Growing Power having a reputation as 'self-serving' and 'not a team player,' as played out in the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council's work with Mayor Rahm Emanuel's office to develop a composting ordinance, which, in the end, ended up favoring large organizations with infrastructure and access to lots of land over small scale producers and possible start-ups with an interest in compost. In this sense, the resistance that Growing Power faces does not come from entrenched interests also occupying a technological or industrial field, instead it is happening at the local level in the discursive field of sustainability. And just as Erika Allen either brushes off or ignores these challenges as being irrelevant to Growing Power's goals of economic viability, so too does the sustainability transitions theoretical framework fail to grasp what makes Growing Power 'successful'—building power through economic development.

Conclusion

While the sustainability transitions field would describe Growing Power's grassroots innovations in terms of the food production niche and developing sustainable food producing practices, the actual innovation in reorganizing social relationships is how Growing Power is creating an economically viable means of production that is rooted in

community. Growing Power itself is an economic engine providing jobs, goods, and services to the benefit of the communities in which it is located. Instead of these benefits being ex post facto, generating these economic gains is at the forefront of the organization's mission and practices. Besides failing to capture the factors that make Growing Power a successful sustainability initiative, Growing Power also turns the basic assumptions of sustainability transitions on their heads. This includes not only the focus on economic viability, but also focusing on dismantling structural racism and inequality. At best, the theoretical framework of sustainability transitions ignores racism and inequality; at worst, it lumps them in to the understanding of 'landscape' as an exogenous factor, the sociocultural counterpoint to climate change and peak oil.

CONCLUSION: CREATING EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

This dissertation has provided a framework for understanding how sustainability is enacted and experienced on the ground. In doing so, I have sought to inform scholarship on alternative pathways and sustainability transitions, which tend to prioritize a realist view of the environment based on political-economic events and processes conceived at a broad scale and through economic and scientific measures, such as, carbon emissions and agricultural yields. I have also aimed to contribute to our understanding of cultural approaches to environmental sociology, which examine culture either as part of an environmental movement or in terms of attitudes and behaviors. My research fills the gap between political-economic and cultural approaches in environmental sociology, by showing how “environments” and “nature” are understood at the everyday level through the lived experience of poor, black people in Chicago who work in organizations that are environmental, but in very different ways. By examining organizations and how they distribute or influence the distribution of the benefits of what is often called sustainability, I connect culture to the macro-level constraints and features of political economy. I have demonstrated that marginalized groups have different ideas of what the benefits of sustainability are and what they should be. Such differences are amplified when governments seek to promote private sector and grassroots sustainability efforts. As I have shown, while portending to uplift the poor, sustainable development efforts largely

serve middle class interests, desires, and visions of urban nature. However, I also show how some organizations, such as Growing Power, Inc., are challenging mainstream ideas of sustainability and ensuring that marginalized communities have access to the benefits of sustainability.

For environmental sociologists critical of sustainability efforts, I provide counterexamples at the local level showing how some organizations are able to ensure that marginalized groups can have agency in sustainable development. By connecting these examples to the concepts of alternative pathways and sustainability transitions, I show how these organizations can scale up or play a role in a larger movement working toward social, economic, political and environmental change, more specifically, a just and sustainable society. Through ethnographic research, I am able to provide environmental sociologists with a better understanding of the lived experience of the urban poor as they engage in various sustainability efforts.

Furthermore, I show the varied outcomes of different hybrid organizations seeking to combine the profit motive with ideals of working towards 'the social good.' The urban sustainability organizations that I examine seek to influence or portend to represent the cultural values of Chicago's urban poor. In this way, I show how organizations, and the wider alternative pathways in which they participate, act as a bridge between culture and political economy. Indeed, the majority of sustainable

practices and the practice of sustainable development occurs through these hybrid organizations. In turn these organizations filter and shape the culture and values of participants and vice versa, all while working within the wider political economic context of the deindustrialized city. While the study of environmental social movements can provide a similar perspective, it tends to focus on people's resistance to environmental bads via environmental justice movements. My research highlights how these communities are reconstructing urban nature given their values and the constraints and possibilities of the deindustrialized city.

The second major contribution of this research is to enrich our understanding of the lived experience of urban life via political ecology. In general, urban sociology has considered nature as something largely absent from cities, or only tangentially related to economic, political and cultural experiences of city life. As I have shown, urban nature can no longer be ignored, because "the environment," in many guises, has become an economic engine for the postindustrial city. The promise of idea of urban sustainability is first, that sustainable development seeks to create the clean, green, and healthy urban playground that many young professionals and 'tech workers' currently seek. Second, urban planners and politicians often believe that it can provide jobs and opportunities not only for these "tech" and "new economy" workers, but also jobs for the poor. And finally, these same actors often see sustainable development as providing the poor with

the capacity to feed themselves via urban agriculture that is thought to remediate food deserts, thereby lessening the burden on public programs.

Increasingly, solutions to urban poverty focus on taking advantage of the existing ‘assets’ of impoverished communities. This understanding of assets tends to include large expanses of polluted land, abandoned homes and city lots, and crumbling factories and manufacturing facilities. While redeveloping these assets to house the next generation of small to mid-size manufacturing firms could potentially reinvigorate urban economies and bring middle class jobs to impoverished neighborhoods, the momentum of the food desert discourse and neoliberal notions of opportunity and personal responsibility has overwhelmed these other options by pushing to the fore urban and vertical agriculture, despite the competition of an industrial agriculture heavily subsidized with tax dollars. That said, urban sociologists and ethnographers who study the deindustrial city and urban poverty cannot ignore these proposed solutions to urban poverty, or how they perpetuate inequality and interact with other urban processes such as gentrification. This dissertation has contributed to this understanding by comparing three urban sustainability organizations and their outcomes via the experience of marginalized people engaged in and by these organizations. I’ve done so in order to develop a vision of urban sustainability, and some strategies to achieve it, that foregrounds the needs and desires of the poor. Indeed, the poor view sustainability in different ways, as my multi-sited ethnography shows.

Using Multi-sited Ethnography to Understand Urban Sustainability

My use of multi-site ethnography allows for a comparative and relational examination of different urban sustainability initiatives. By staying within Chicago, I control for the political-economic situation of the deindustrial city including the local geography and the existing responses to poverty and environmental degradation. Since Growing Power, Inc., Greencorps Chicago, and the Chicago Honey Co-op are all operating within the same local context, I compare how they engage marginalized communities, as well as the outcomes they produce. Furthermore, by examining these organizations in relation to one another I draw attention to the different organizational structures and how organizational structure influences engagement with the poor, the outcomes they promote, and their vision of the future.

While traditional ethnography typically seeks to understand the intricate workings of a single group, particularly the daily interactions that reproduce the group or a related social process, multi-site ethnography allows for greater extrapolation to wider society and processes of social change. However, this comes with its own unique set of challenges, particularly synthesizing a wider variety of data. Moreover, the data gathered from participant-observation within each organization is not always commensurate, in that it is typically not directly comparable. Therefore, multi-sited ethnography requires synthesizing different types of data in a way that the organizations can be compared. For

instance, I had various levels of access to each organization I worked with which provided different data sources for each. Thus, my synthesis of Growing Power's work largely comes from publicly available documents, workshops, and public presentations by staff, while my understanding of Greencorps Chicago relies on extensive interviews with participants as well as more traditional ethnographic data gathered while working alongside participants out in the field or partaking in the different training sessions that participants are required to do. In this way, I was not able to directly compare answers to interview questions and see how they varied between organizations. Again, these different degrees of access reflect the local context and each organization's past experiences with researchers, participant-observers or otherwise. However, I viewed these attempts to garner institutional access and cooperation as important evidence about each organization and how they envision serving the communities they serve and engage.

Through this research, I have highlighted the various outcomes and experiences of urban sustainability and their relation to different types of organizations. From this, I extrapolate lessons for how urban sustainability might look when the perspectives of the poor are prioritized and how some organizations are working toward that today. In turn, this provides key points of reference from which to judge sustainability organizations that purport to help the poor. In the following section, I highlight these lessons and how they provide a framework for an urban sustainability that takes poverty seriously.

Thinking about sustainability with the poor in mind

As I have shown, the experience of sustainability from the perspective of marginalized communities is critical to any vision of urban sustainability. I use Julie Guthman's (2008a, 2008b) work as point from which to start conceptualizing this experience of sustainability. In two key pieces (2008a, 2008b) she argues that many alternative food projects and practices reflect the values and experiences of the educated, middle class whites who initiate them. Embedded within such practices are assumptions about the 'right way' to eat and how one should spend one's time. In the case of alternative food, she shows, this includes placing value on and rewarding eating fresh whole foods, and spending time planting, harvesting, and preparing one's own food. According to Guthman, it is these moral virtues that many of her white students envisioned themselves bringing to poor people of color through their course projects. In this sense, poor people of color are the objects of alternative food practices. Guthman argues that subjects, on the other hand, are those who freely associate (or not) with such projects and practices, and have the agency to help shape them.

I use this object-subject continuum in order to show how the poor are integrated into different visions of urban environmental sustainability in Chicago, and end with a critique of this vision. The Chicago Honey Co-op can be placed far toward the poor-

people-as-object-end of the spectrum. As I have shown, the Chicago Honey Co-op provides few benefits to the community in which it is situated. Two of the three staff members who received economic compensation from the CHC resided outside of North Lawndale in middle-class white neighborhoods and freely entered and exited North Lawndale. Much of CHC's reputation as an exemplary local food enterprise was based on an inflated reputation connected to their involvement in a short-lived jobs training program for people in the neighborhood, specifically people recently released from prison. Despite ending before the finish of one harvest season, the job training program continued to be touted on the CHC web site, by Slow Food Chicago, and in online, print, and television profiles of the organization. Furthermore, the goods produced by the CHC are out of the price range of and a low priority for many of the poor residents of North Lawndale. Likewise, the 'green space' created by the organization was largely inaccessible to members of the community except for the middle class black families who constituted the North Lawndale Greening Committee and kept garden plots at the urban bee farm. While providing no paid work, residents of North Lawndale were doing symbolic work, adding cultural value to the CHC label and products. For many Slow Food Chicago members and local food consumers who paid a premium price for CHC products, their willingness to do so was partly due to how they envisioned that the CHC worked and who they envisioned benefited from the CHC. In Guthman's terms, poor

black residents are the imagined beneficiaries—or the objects—of the alternative food project that is the Chicago Honey Co-op.

Towards the opposite end of the spectrum, the subject-end, lie the low-income people who work at Growing Power, Inc. Growing Power is a people of color-led organization. Growing Power prioritizes the fundamental needs of its staff, the participants in the youth program, and consumers by providing a living wage, meaningful educational experiences and a stipend, and low-cost fresh foods, respectively. Indeed, many of the staff were initially in the youth program or had previously interned with Growing Power. This shows Growing Power's presence in and commitment to the communities it serves. Furthermore, Growing Power staff, as well as youth participants, have influence over the direction of the organization and projects. For example, many of the youth become the face of the organization, speaking for the organization at the National & International Urban & Small Farms Conference hosted biannually by Growing Power. Here, youth facilitate meetings, lead technical workshops, and have prominent speaking roles during the conference's plenary sessions. Moreover, youth involvement is at the core of the aesthetic of each farm and garden that Growing Power manages. Youth continuously design and execute murals, signage, statuary, and ornamental landscaping. In this way, youth and staff are subjects of the sustainability practices of Growing Power as they have agency in shaping such practices.

In relation to both the Chicago Honey Co-op and Growing Power, Inc., the poor in Greencorps Chicago fall somewhere in between the subject pole and the object pole along the continuum. Greencorps has aspects that are both patronizing and empowering to the mostly poor black men with whom it engages. On the one hand, the jobs training program operates from a deficit-based perspective, focusing on the skills and education that each participant lacks. Much of this education teaches participants how to view the natural world like white middle class educated people do. This includes scientific understandings of nature as well as specific ideas of aesthetics, particularly when it comes to landscaping—or more specifically, the expectations of consumers of landscaping services. In the end, the program does not create jobs for the graduates, but instead helps them navigate the private sector where they compete with and sometimes displace other poor black men and women seeking menial labor.

On the other hand, Greencorps provides an education and industry-standard certifications that participants find valuable overall. In fact, passing certification tests and completing Greencorps' courses is a point of pride for participants. In my interviews, many of the men lament not completing high school, and completing Greencorps training appears to fill much of that void in terms of achieving education milestones. Moreover, during their training, participants receive a stipend—which is roughly the equivalent of minimum wage—as well as benefits such as health insurance, unemployment insurance,

and workers compensation, things not provided by the few jobs that are available to these men.

Greencorps also facilitates access to the city for the participants. Many Greencorps participants isolate themselves in their homes and immediate surroundings as they try to avoid getting caught up in violence or being targeted by police. Through paid work, Greencorps gives participants legitimate reasons to enter into neighborhoods (sometimes even parts of their own neighborhoods) and parts of the city which had previously been off-limits to them. In these ways, Greencorps engages participants as both subjects and objects.

Guthman's framework provides a useful set of tools for comparing not simply whether the poor are included in "green" urban development, but specifically, *how* they are included, and more specifically, by providing a relational understanding of the experience of sustainability. Vital to this process is understanding how organizations create and funnel socio-natural flows, or the movement of people, things, culture, and hybrids of the three. Indeed, it is only through this lens that things such as the geographic mobility of the Greencorps participants make sense as an environmental benefit envisioned by participants.

This research fills a gap in the sociology of sustainability by including the experiences of marginalized communities engaging in sustainable development and

illuminating their cultural understandings of the benefits of sustainability and how they compare and contrast to those of mainstream sustainability practitioners. Hess's alternative pathways, Schor's sustainable consumption, and Seyfang's sustainability transitions research all recognize that sustainability is primarily practiced by, and the benefits are enjoyed by, white, middle class, educated 'environmental types.' And each author emphasizes the importance of these practices being inclusive and accessible to people across the socio-economic spectrum. However, their emphasis the primacy of reducing carbon emissions to address the severity of climate change through largely middle-class and professional class initiatives minimize issues of inclusion and accessibility by reducing the benefits of sustainability to those that trickle down to the poor.

But the focus on climate as the key environmental issue and attendant middle-class and professionally-led strategies is misguided. Action on climate change at the elite level has stalled, and no middle-class movement is pushing it forward. The hope that the growing renewable energy technology sector could gain a foothold and eventually supplant the fossil fuel industry is all but gone, in part because of the job offerings that the fossil fuel industry offers to the middle-classes. And the sustainable consumption practices of middle class Americans have not expanded far enough fast enough. Beyond simply not being inclusive and accessible, sometimes, as I show, middle-class sustainability practices are exploitative and serve to reproduce rather than ameliorate

class and race inequality. Indeed, the greatest hope to fight urban environmental ills, including climate may lie in the potential power of marginalized communities in the United States and across the globe. These communities have already been practicing resilience in terms of surviving, and often thriving, in the face of scarcity and exploitation. Therefore, if many of the consequences of climate change are inevitable due to the carbon already in the atmosphere, then middle class communities will need to look to the practices, systems and innovations that have been developed by organizations such as Growing Power in order to survive in the future.

Growing Power provides one possible model for engaging marginalized communities as subjects of sustainable development. The Growing Power model starts with leadership indigenous to the community it represents. In this case, Growing Power identifies as a people of color-led organization largely representing poor blacks on the north side of Milwaukee and on the south and west sides of Chicago. While indigenous leadership does not necessarily mean infallibility, in the case of Growing Power it is intended to bring race, or more specifically racial inequality, to the forefront of the organization's mission and the discourse surrounding the organization's work. Growing Power's work is largely driven by efforts to ameliorate racial inequality and they use issues of food justice in order to bring attention to that problem and to overcome it.

The second criterion that an inclusive and accessible sustainability initiative should meet, and is exemplified by Growing Power, is accountability to the community. This is a difficult objective to meet, particularly when representing a community that has been subject to extreme disenfranchisement, exploitation, and alienation. In order to begin to overcome such challenges sustainability initiatives should develop mechanisms to gauge accountability. In the case of Growing Power, this includes ensuring fresh and affordable food, jobs, youth development, as well as employing more standard measures of engagement such as opening up participation in setting the policy agenda for Growing Power via involvement in the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council. Other mechanisms include developing and maintaining partnerships with other people of color-led organizations, such as the Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Renewable Living representing the south side of Chicago, or on a national scale, such as working with indigenous communities in New Mexico through the Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative. In these cases, other communities of color potentially provide Growing Power with critical feedback regarding community accountability.

Lastly, Growing Power shows that in order to be inclusive and accessible sustainable development must prioritize issues of inequality. In Growing Power's, that is done by seeking economic viability in order to ensure meeting the economic needs of employees and community members who do purchase the lower-cost food grown by Growing Power. In this way, Growing Power is using profit to build community wealth

in terms of their own economic engine, productive lands, and skilled labor force.

Importantly, this focus on profit is not the sort that is seen in contemporary neoliberal discourses in which ever greater profits are the goal, and ever greater concentration of wealth, but one in which economic benefits are widely shared in a community that has historically been exploited by whites and the upper classes.

The framework provided by Growing Power makes it more likely that social, economic, and environmental benefits of sustainable development will include the urban poor. As I have shown, the models provided by alternative pathways and sustainability transitions have a difficult time accounting for and including Growing Power's unique approach because they too simplistically focus on underspecified calls for access or democracy, as in the case of the alternative pathways approach, or focus only on voluntary organization innovation within a single niche, as in the case of sustainability transitions scholarship. Instead, Growing Power seeks a holistic approach that incorporates, prioritizes, and celebrates the perspective of the poor and marginalized communities it operates within, taking into account the variety of challenges they face as well as their particular views of what the benefits of urban sustainability should be. Often, this requires interacting with the public and private sectors in complicated and seemingly contradictory ways. In other words, there is no clear pathway to urban sustainability for the poor, except, perhaps, through a multi-faceted and complex organization such as Growing Power. It is important to incorporate such organizations

into scholarship of alternative pathways, exploring whether and how such organizations can cooperate with other organizations working towards sustainability, as well as how the Growing Power model might be scaled-up and even decentralized.

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