Grounding Governance in Floating Stakeholders: Theory and Communication, Collectivity, and Relational Transformation in Practice—An Ethnographic and Discourse-Analytic Case Study

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GROUNDING GOVERNANCE IN FLOATING STAKEHOLDERS:
COMMUNICATION, COLLECTIVITY, AND RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN
THEORY AND PRACTICE—AN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND DISCOURSE-ANALYTIC CASE
STUDY

by

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Communication, Collectivity, and Relational Transformation in Theory and Practice—An Ethnographic and Discourse-Analytic Case Study

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Abstract

Konieczka, Stephen P. (Ph.D., Department of Communication)

Grounding Governance in Floating Stakeholders: Communication, Collectivity, and Relational Transformation in Theory and Practice—An Ethnographic and Discourse-Analytic Case Study

Dissertation directed by Professor Lawrence R. Frey

Public participation theory and research claims that participation can transform policy and relations, but evidence supporting that assertion is limited, particularly in real-world situations. This dissertation argues that to understand if and how participation might transform policy and relations, it is necessary to study participation in situated practices. The chapters report details and lessons from the Community Collaborative Group (CCG), a 2-year stakeholder participation governance process.

In this study, “stakeholder” has a specific meaning and is employed as an analytic concept to reflect on uses and interpretation of symbolic categories in social discourses and interactional talk. As a category, the stakeholder concept challenges received interdisciplinary ideals of collectivity as being psychological, binary, and meaningful in competitive relations, raising questions and concerns that treating categories as symbols addresses. As a symbolic construct, categories are communicative, constituted in difference, and meaningful in discursive relations. To study uses, interpretations, and influences of categories, the study examines symbolic practices of categorization, dis/identification, and representation during the CCG.

Initiated by a public agency, the CCG represented ideals of investment, design, and facilitation, but it struggled to fulfill policy and relational objectives of the process and theoretical ideals. At the macrolevel, this report discusses how uses and interpretations of locally and situationally relevant categories influenced the design, process, and outcomes of the
collaboration; at the microlevel, contextual features and relationships constituted in uses and interpretations of those categories are examined.

Theory and practice are blended in this report, with the ethnographic narrative reconstructing events that contain conceptual lessons and extant theory serving as the ground for examining events in situ. Based on direct observations of the CCG, and a large collection of recorded talk and documents, the study chronicles the life of the collaboration from its inception to completion, staying as close to the interactional level as possible.

This empirical study of the collaboration leads to conclusions that have theoretical and practical relevance for understanding categories, collectivity, and participation. The unifying theme across those conclusions is that people use and interpret categories in very different ways, under different conditions, and for different ends. Whereas prevailing ideals of collectivity suggest stable, singular, and shared meanings of categories, this study concludes that categories are contested, multiple, and communicatively constituted. However, by approaching the design and enactment of participation strategically, the messiness of participation can be organized and leveraged towards social transformation.
Dedicated to W. Barnett Pearce (1943–2011)
Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support, contributions, and criticisms of innumerable individuals; to those named and unnamed below, my gratitude escapes representation.

First, my dissertation committee offered support, guidance, and criticism. Professor Lawrence R. Frey served as my academic advisor, offering guidance and, simultaneously, allowing the project to find itself. Members of my dissertation committee—Professors Robert T. Craig, Timothy Kuhn, Karen Tracy, and Andrew Cowell—offered their assistance as needed. Special thanks to Dr. Tracy, who brought the subject of this research, the Community Collaborative Group (CCG), to my attention.

Second, this study would not have been possible without the members of the CCG. For 2 years, I observed those individuals as they attempted to govern together in the face of deep differences, profound consequences, and extreme pressures. The CCG experience would have tested the civility and rationality of most people, and this report attends to its highest dramas. No matter their actions in a given moment, all of the CCG members were passionate, committed, knowledgeable, and not as bad as their critics might describe them, or as a depiction in this report may unintentionally represent them.

Staff at the City of Boulder Department of Open Spaces and Mountain Parks (OSMP) also were helpful. All OSMP staff and board members with whom I had contact during the project were helpful and welcomed the investigation. Two members of OSMP deserve mention by name. Michele Gonzales, an assistant to the department, fulfilled many of my requests about OSMP, and produced official and unofficial records that are major datasets in this study. Kacey French, another assistant to the department, fulfilled a similar role exclusively for the CCG,
taking minutes, as well as recording other salient data about the CCG’s deliberations. The work of these two women was essential in understanding and producing a detailed analysis of the CCG.

Finally, several parties to the CCG offered to discuss their experiences with me, and during his time with the CCG, its designer and first facilitator, Todd Bryan, supported this project, and was eager, when time permitted, to discuss it and larger issues. Heather Bergman, another CCG facilitator was also helpful and offered insights that informed this report.

Several people external to the project were helpful in providing resources that contributed to the report. Dorothy Holland, Linda Putnam, and Michale Saward all offered reading suggestions. Dr. Elizabeth Pike invited me to discuss the CCG with her class, and happily offered a beautiful photograph for inclusions in the report, which I was not able to use. Dr. Jeff Mitton allowed me to use his stunning photography of the “mountain backdrop.”

Over time, this research grew in breadth and depth, such that the world beyond it was almost nonexistent. I am grateful for those people who tried to remind me the world had not really gone away particularly Jane Elvins, Sara McClean, and Nate Savory.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introducing to the public and decision makers the idea of hosting a community-based collaboration, the director of Boulder, Colorado’s OSMP stated that the planning task facing his department was “so critical and complex, that, conceptually, this seems like the way to go” (Patton, OSBT 4/22/09). The key word in that statement is “conceptually.” Reservations about the “Community Collaborative Group” (CCG), as the proposed process came to be called, reasonably existed, but interested parties generally were supportive of the effort, excited about its development, and optimistic about its prospects in the abstract. During that first discussion of the proposal, a member of OSMP’s governing board, the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT), said that she “thinks this process has a lot of promise” (Feinberg, OSBT 4/22/09). One member of the public explained the CCG as an “opportunity for creativity” (Kwasniewski, OSBT 4/22/09), and another spoke about his “hope for a better process than has happened in the past” (McDonald, OSBT 4/22/09). OSMP staff explained that “the investment will be paid for tenfold” (Pashall, OSBT 4/22/09).

Flash forward to when the CCG is concluding. Once a concept, hope, idea, investment, and/or opportunity, the process had been unfolding for nearly 2 years; it and its influences and value no longer were abstractions. At that time, it was not important whether, conceptually, the CCG had been the way to go but whether it had been the practical way to go. Again, there was broad agreement about the answer. A facilitator of the CCG described the process as “painful, agonizing, and expensive” (Bergman, CCG 1/6/11). Among CCG members, one participant
explained that “I’m not happy with it at all” (Oveson, CCG 1/6/11). In the public eye, the CCG was “flawed” (Gutner, CCG 12/6/10), “deeply flawed” (Haymes, CCG 12/6/10; Yates, CCG 12/6/10). At an internal review of the CCG, OSMP staff described the process as being of little value to the department’s work, the community that the department served, and to community members who worked at OSMP. A member of the OSBT hypothesized that another CCG-like process could lead to “social and cultural conflict that will damage Boulder in many ways” (Briggs, 2011, para. 5).

Those opinions about the CCG at its beginning and end reflect the knotty problem(s) of relationship(s) between theory and practice in community-based collaboration, and other participatory processes of public governance, the reasons and reasoning for which always are already in-between ideals (e.g., equality and justice) and realities (e.g., relations and institutions). Contemporary critics and supporters of participation acknowledge a yawning disconnect between theory and practical instantiations of participatory processes (see, e.g., Bohman, 1998; Chambers, 2003; Jacobs, Cook, & Delli Carpini, 2009; Mendelberg & Oleske, 2000; Mutz, 2008; Sanders, 1997; Thompson, 2008). To mature, many observers rightly explain that, participatory theory must be assessed in terms of participatory practices (see Delli Carpini, Cooks, & Jacobs, 2004; Levine, Fung, & Gastil, 2005; Webler, 1999). This report advocate that participation should be studied in situ, but protests the position widely expressed in the extant literature that theoretical–practical investigations should focus on testing existing normative theory. In this study, it is held that participation processes should be the grounds for participation theory, not simply theory’s testing-ground.

Drawing on more than 18 months of field work on/with the CCG, this dissertation works to articulate a practical theory (see Barge, 2001; Barge & Craig, 2009) of public participation
that bridges claims about participation in the abstract, and the concrete practices of participation. Specifically, this report foregrounds the claim of theorists that participation can have transformative influences on people, policy, and processes of governance (see, e.g., Warren, 1992), and strives to reconstruct that theory by studying how and with what influence parties to the CCG process used and interpreted social categories and discourses. The principal purpose of this chapter is to establish interpretive space that allows reconstruction of communicative uses and interpretations of categories by parties to the CCG to link with general issues of participation.

To study categories-in-use, it is critical that research occurs in-between multiple discourses at varying (and variable) levels, tracking between the local and the global in theories and practices that are not always closely aligned in academic literatures, but wash across each other in real-world contexts. Such conditions mean that a single theoretical perspective (as a foundation or as an endpoint) rejecting competing perspectives is liable to overlook intersections at which categories are contested and thereby become interactionally meaningful. Instead of clarifying and informing, what below are called “foundational” approaches to research, limit analysis and interpretation of complex processes, such as the CCG. This study, therefore, adopts a constellational perspective in which various (and sometimes conflicting) theories, concepts, and methods coexist without the demand for synthesis of their differences (see Bernstein, 1992).

Three constellations—one paradigmatic, one conceptual, and one methodological—guided the reconstruction of the CCG and distillation of conceptual lessons that are presented in this report. First, to operate in-between theories and practices of participation, a constellation was formed that couples the heuristics of practical theory as engaged reflection (see Barge & Craig, 2010) and postcritical ethnography (see Lather, 2007). Together, engaged reflection and
postcritical ethnography focus attention on talk in-between discourses of theory and practice, and that talk’s constitution of theories and practices. Second, taking events in the CCG as the guide, analytic concepts were gathered into a constellation that describe the categories focal in this study, and communicative practices through which categories are made meaningful by interlocutors. Specifically, stakeholder theory (see Freeman, 1984; Freidman & Miles, 2006) offered a useful description of relevant categories (i.e., stakeholders), and communicative practices of categorization (Sacks, 1967, 1972; Stoke, 2012), dis/identification (Cheney, 1991; Holmer-Naddan, 1996), and representation (Saward, 2010), together, provided a multifaceted description of communicative uses and interpretations of stakeholder categories during the CCG. Finally, with respect to the study’s methods, action-implicative discourse analysis (AIDA; K. Tracy, 2005) and the discourse-historical approach (DHA; Wodak, 2001) offered complementary and contrasting analytic and interpretative ideals in-between cultural and communication.

In two sections, this chapter sets the stage for reconstruction of the CCG. First, practical theory and postcritical ethnography are introduced, describing how they encourage research(ers) to attended to interdependent discourses, ideals, and practices from which can be drawn situated ideals in-between theory and practice. Second, the chapter surveys elements and events in the background of the CCG necessary to understand the story of the CCG told in the body of this report. In describing that background, the significance of this study is identified for the principal theoretical and practical discourses relevant to the CCG. The chapter concludes by surveying details of the conceptual and methodological constellations of the study, data that inform this report, and the structure of the dissertation.
Stakeholder(s): Category and Strategy

Participation comes in many forms (see Abers, 1998; R. Anderson, Cissna, & Clune, 2003; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Arnstein, 1969, 1975; Baiocchi, 2001, 2003; Bohm, 1996; Crosby, Kelly, & Schaefer, 1986; Dempsy, 2010; Dietz & Stern, 2009; Dukes, 1996; Fischer & Forester, 1993; Fischer & Gottweis, 2012; Fung, 2006; Fung & Wright, 2001; Gastil, 2000a, 2000b; Gastil & Black, 2007; Gray, 1989; Huitema, van de Kerkhof, & Pesch, 2007; Innes & Booher, 2010; Leib, 2004; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2001a, 2001b; Mansbridge, 1980; Mendelberg, 2002; O’Leary & Vij, 2012; Pateman, 1970; Renn, Webler, & Wiedemann, 1995; E. Rogers & Weber, 2010; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, 2005; Ryfe, 2002; Tannen, 1998; Warren, 1992). Variations in approaches to participation are vast and significant, but all variants claim to produce, or strive towards, some form of social and/or political change. The so-called “transformative thesis of public participation” lays at the heart of contemporary participation theory, maintaining that participation in public life will “transform” political relations, policy, and actions rooted in self-interests to those that are community-spirited, for the common good, or in a polity’s collective interest (see Barber, 1994; Benhabib, 1996; Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Dryzek, 2010; Fishkin, 2009; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1987, 1997; Leighninger, 2006; Mutz, 2006; Sanders, 2010; Warren, 1996).³

The claimed transformations of focus in this study are relationships, particularly the prospect that enacted public participation can transform how members of a political entity conceptualize and perform their individual, group, and community interests and identities. The study fills an important void in the participation literature, which currently has limited empirical confirmation of the influence of participation on individuals’ shifts in perceptions of self-interest, and has not yet empirically validated claims about long-term effects of participation on
communities and institutions. Reasons for lack of strong conclusions about participation’s transformative potential are diverse, but a lack of grounded research and weaknesses in the abstract theoretical moorings of the transformative thesis are two of the most significant limitations. This section sketches the problems of the transformative thesis, to which the report responds with a reconstructed thesis of transformation grounded in a detailed reflection on the CCG.

Limiting Transformation

The lack of empirical research concerning transformation through participation is an important, and, as discussed below, a widely noted limitation of the extant literature and practice. However, for several reasons, theoretical/philosophical limitations of the transformative thesis are more important limitations than the lack of empirical research per se. First, although philosophically rational, the path dependencies forwarded in much extant theory move from individual learning to social transformation without an accounting for “participation” in social change. Participation may transform individuals, and even societies, but extant theory has few, if any, means of directly connecting one with the other. Second, participatory theories have a weak to nonexistent conception of the political subject at the individual or collective level. Those theories have little to say about subjectivity beyond vague notions that people (e.g., “citizens,” “participants,” and “stakeholders”) will shift from political relations and actions rooted in self-interest to those that are community-spirited. Moreover, the ideals about subjectivity that are expressed in the literature treat interests and identities as personal and psychological constructs held in individual’s minds, and constructed through rational and independent (i.e., self-reflection) cost-benefit analysis. Finally, contemporary perspectives of participation maintain that conditions and processes of communication are the route to transformation, but they have
limited ideals about communication (see Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Kelshaw, 2007; Rosenberg, 2005). In participation literatures, communication is viewed, principally, as an expressive faculty (see e.g., Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002), not a constitutive process (see e.g., Pearce & Pearce, 2001); information, not “communication,” is the crux of most participatory perspectives. Information, of course, can be conveyed without interaction, whereas communication requires talking with others.

The practical theory developed in this study is intended to address the problem of weak to nonexistent communicatively grounded ties between theoretical assertions and practical realities of social change through public participation processes. To reconstruct the logic of the transformative thesis from a communication perspective, I attend to the lack of ideals about subjectivity in/as communicative process(es) in participation theories, and reflect on uses and interpretations of symbols of subjectivities during a practical process of participation. Specifically, interests and identities are treated here as communicative processes of making and remaking meanings of symbolic categories. This approach addresses both the theoretical and practical limitations, noted above, of the transformative thesis.

First, by grounding interests and identities in communication, categories clarify the logic of the transformative thesis, removing doubt about the place of communication in participation’s program for social or relational change. Second, attention to categories provides an empirical object through which the influence of participation on relations can be observed by examining ways in which people in participation use and interpret relevant categories. Finally, by centering categories, not only does the fact that participation always involves concrete subjects come into the foreground (allowing structures to be responsive to people, and not vice versa) but the multidimensional and social nature of individuals in relation can be embraced.
Transforming “Stakeholder(s)”

As symbolic categories, interests, like identities, are communicatively constructed and performed (see Bentley, 1908; Mathiowetz, 2008; Sen, 1985, 1986; Swedberg, 2005). Furthermore, interests—specifically, shared interests—is a broadly accepted definition of collective identity (see Albert & Whetten, 1985; Cheney, 1991; Frey & Sunwolf, 2004, 2005; Jenkins, 2004). Although studies of collective identity have no better definition of “interests” than do participation literatures, collectivity studies is a critical piece of thinking about participation (and governance broadly) that has been absent from literatures. Study of participation and collectivity are natural partners, and there are many ways to approach collectivity that can inform participation (see, e.g., Campbell, 2005; Hajer, 2005; Huitt, 1954). This study attends to the communication practices that make categories of collectivity meaningful and influential during participation.

As communicatively constituted symbols of interests and identities, categories always already are in-between the individual and the social, but, recently, theorists and researchers of collectivity have begun to view collectives themselves as constituted in communication. In those literatures, the existence of a collective is grounded in the presence of people’s shared interpretation of common symbols of the group’s (or another group’s) identity and interests. Although not always, or usually, stated in such terms, the keystone of emerging symbolic perspectives on collectivity is the category, with contestation over uses and interpretations of categories the site of production and reproduction of social relations.

As symbols of collectivity, categories serve two roles in communication. First, categories are used to name and, thereby, distinguish between types of people and their relations (e.g., citizen and noncitizen). Acts of naming, however, are not purely descriptive. Value-laden
and inference-rich, uses and interpretations of categories structure interaction among people, socially (e.g. in institutions) and privately (e.g. in interpersonal talk). Importantly, meanings of symbolic categories are not always shared and never are stable; symbols of social categories are not fixed inherently or by objects in the world but, instead, they acquire meaning in-between talk and discourses.

My analytic agenda for this report is to understand how and with what influences parties involved in the CCG communicatively used and interpreted symbols of groups and interests (i.e., categories) that often are described as “stakeholder(s).” Stakeholder is a common term in contemporary popular and academic discourses, and the vast majority of relevant literatures that use the word “stakeholder,” have a thin to nonexistent conceptualization of the term. Usually, “stakeholder” is simply equated with an “interest group,” or a social identity groups (e.g., workers, conservationists, marketers). Although using stakeholder to simply describe shared interests is not unwarranted, it is not a terribly strong or sophisticated use.

Stakeholder literatures (see e.g., Burton & Dunn, 1996; Caroll, 1999; Clarkson, 1995; Frooman, 1999; T. M. Jones & Wicks, 1999a, 1999b; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood; 1997; Savage, Nix, Carlton, Whitehead, & Blair, 1991; Wicks & Freeman, 1998), have their limitations (see Orts & Strudler, 2010; Seaman, 2010), but they have at least two qualities useful to the study of public participation. First, stakeholder theory dissolves the common assumption that people and groups called “stakeholders” can be categorized discretely; within any given category of stakeholders, interests and identities of people so named overlap, intersect, and diverge at the individual and collective level in relation to specific issues. Second, stakeholder theory argues that management of relationships between stakeholders is a proactive enterprise, not something that can be left to chance.
Because its practical ground is the governance of large corporations, stakeholder theory does not blend seamlessly with public participation (similar problems are encountered with collective identity). However, between the two domains, commonalities are great enough, and their differences potentially are generative enough, that explorations at their intersections are warranted and likely constructive for both sides. The following section discusses how studying participation using the stakeholder concept facilitates understanding and critique of participatory transformation in theory and practice.

**Studying Stakeholder Transformation**

*Discourse* is a key term of contemporary scholarship and practices, but there is no single way “discourse” it is defined or employed (see Mills, 2004; J. Potter & Wethererll, 1990). Some theorists and researchers treat discourse as a paradigm (see e.g., Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Torfing, 1999), others as an analytic approach (see e.g., van Leeuwen, 2008), and still others equate discourse with communication. What is agreed by discourse theorists and researchers is that symbols and meanings are among the most important and powerful factors in understanding, sustaining, and changing individuals, relations, and institutions. Informed by poststructuralist (e.g., Foucault, 1972), deconstructive (e.g., Derrida, 1997), and dialogic (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981) philosophies, discourse perspectives reject essentialism and finality in language. As G. Williams (1999) explained, “every act involves a new element, and tone is the witness to the unique quality of every act and its singular relation to its performer” (p. 201; see also Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Searle, 2006; Wittgenstein, 1973). Furthermore, according to G. Williams, “meaning is the result of confrontation between social groups in the form of social practice related to the signification and language play” (p. 202). In short, a discourse can be described as
an evolving and shifting interpretive frame constituted in the communicative contestation of meanings among social actors.

The lack of fixed meanings of a given discourse, particularly with regard to its intersecting with other discourses, steadily have eroded ideals about objectivity in language and society, leading some to reject essentialism in theory and practice. Discourse theories claim that communication constitutes meanings, and that meanings constitute institutions; hence, there is finality/ground only in symbols, and symbols always are contingently meaningful human constructions. Researchers who view as a positive development the failure of foundations to maintain their structuring and interpretive authority have many gone in many directions—including performativity (see, e.g., Butler, 2006), intersectionality (see, e.g., Crenshaw, 1989), constructivism (see, e.g., Gergen, 1985). Here the general ideals, and not a particular perspective are adopted, and called postfoundational, or constellational.

**Foundations and Constellations**

Postfoundationalism holds not only that foundations are symbols (i.e., discourses), but that understanding comes through “the constant interrogation of metaphysical figures of foundation” (Marchart, 2007, p. 2). Importantly, as Marchart (2007) explained, “Postfoundationalism . . . must not be confused with anti-foundationalism” (p. 2). The latter slides into sophistry, realism, and relativity, whereas postfoundationalism employs foundational assumptions skeptically. From a postfoundational perspective, “The ontological weakening of ground does not lead to the assumption of the total absence of all grounds, but rather to the assumption of the impossibility of final ground” (Marchart, p. 2). In this section, I discuss how, in the absence of objective foundational ground, and in the face of multiple “realities,” this research and report thinks/acts in-between different discourses (i.e., interpretive frames).
Reflecting on the implications of discourse theories in the world, Bernstein (1992) held that no longer is it possible in philosophy or practice to “responsibly claim that there is or can be a final reconciliation . . . in which all difference, otherness, opposition and contradiction are reconciled” (p. 8). Explaining that the contemporary present was too complex and contested for foundational assumptions and essentialist reductionism, Bernstein held that it was an ethical necessity to embrace constellationalism. A constellation is a “cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle” (Jay, 1984, p. 14–15). Constellational thinking attempts to hold together and, simultaneously, to maintain distinctions between, contested and contradictory meanings of words and worlds. Bernstein, for example, maintained that, “the need and desire for reconciliation . . . [and] openness to new, unexpected, contingent rupture . . . [renders] critiques and affirmations . . . always tentative, fallible, open to further questioning” (p. 319).

To make meaningful sense of social phenomena, multiple realities that could be true must be considered, a stance that requires interpretive researchers to question the foundational ideal of a singular explanatory framework that excludes alternative interpretations. Understanding of the social is possible only from standpoints “between different types of action, rationality, rationalization processes, and their complex dynamic interrelations” (Bernstein, 1992, p. 204). In other words, it is an interpretive and ethical imperative to adopt an irreducibly complex constellation of theoretical/philosophical positions that work with and against each other (see Deetz, 2001; McDonald, Bammer, & Deane, 2009), and to stand in-between those perspectives without attempting to resolve all their differences. Ideas about practical theory are among the best available tools for moving from the philosophical ideal of constellations to their uses in empirical research.
Practical Theory as Engaged Reflection

“Engaged reflection” is the name given to an interpretive stance within a constellation of ideals called “practical theory.” Barge and Craig (2010) described practical theory as research “explicitly designed to address practical problems and generate new possibilities for action” (p. 55; see also Cronen, 2001); and they described engaged reflection as practical theory that works to “sustain a productive reflexivity between theory and practice such that each informs the other” (p. 63). Importantly, interpretations vary as to what a reflexive view of the theory–practice relationship is and could be.

The basic tenants of engaged reflection are rooted in Craig’s (1996) notion of reflexive discourse, which holds that meaning is constituted among interdependent discourses of theory and practice. According to Craig (1996), theoretical discourses are “relatively formal, or systematic and abstract,” whereas practical discourses are “relatively unconstrained by an explicit conceptual system and bound to the contingencies of a particular, local context”; consequently, “reflexive discourse . . . is discourse about practice” (pp. 464, 466). Existing on what Craig (1996) called the “theory–practice continuum,” reflexive discourses can be more or less abstract and general, or more or less concrete and specific, with no normative value placed on any particular approach. As Craig (1996) noted, “There is what we do, or practice, and there is talk about what we do, which may or may not be related usefully to the doing” (p. 466).

Practical theory, according to Barge and Craig (2010), is “not a unitary concept with a singular fixed meaning . . . practical theorizing and the concepts and methods one employs . . . vary according to the approach one takes” (p. 55). Methodological direction does not get more specific by isolating practical theory as engaged reflection. Barge and Craig described two heuristics—grounded practical theory (GPT) and design theory—that are aligned closely with
engaged reflection, neither of which has given much attention to methods. In explicating GPT, Craig and Tracy (1995) held that “further development requires methodological trailblazing” (p. 271); Aakhus and Jackson (2005) explained that the importance of methods in design theory research was “the central role accorded to empirical work and the connection of that work to action” (p. 423). Published work in the area of engaged reflection has employed grounded theory (see, e.g., Aakus, 2001), discourse analysis (see, e.g., K. Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001), and ethnography (see, e.g., Ashcraft, 2001); Craig (2012) recently used content analysis. In short, methods for practical theory as engaged reflection are pragmatic choices that are structured by the goals and the contexts of research.

Most studies working through engaged reflection have as their goal the development of a variant of grounded theory; that is, reports seek to identify phenomena in situations and to offer general principles for thought and action in relation to such phenomena. Engaged reflection, however, also can ground theories “in practice by assessing their usefulness as resources for engaged reflection on problems, strategies and principals in applied situations” (Barge & Craig, p. 64; see, e.g., K. Tracy & Muller, 2001). This study pursues the latter type of investigation, but, as noted, the aim is not to “test” a theory. Through engaged reflection, in this report, I examine strengths and limitations of existing ideals of relational transformation as a result of participation. To accomplish that goal, I conducted a “postcritical” ethnographic reconstruction of one such participatory process, the CCG.

**Postcritical Ethnography**

Van Maanen (2011) defined *ethnography* as a “written representation of a culture” (p. 1), and O’Reilly (2009) described it as a “methodology—a theory, or a set of ideas” (p. 3), including iterative design and fieldwork that produce a written representation of a culture. Both
descriptions are accurate, but paper over the fact that cultures represented in ethnography are
reconstructed from fragments of the culture studied that, themselves, are representations.
Ethnographers do not observe a culture and make a representation; they record observations and
those textual materials are used to reconstruct an image of the culture. The mediating role of
data collection and interpretation between culture and ethnographic texts is better highlighted by
adopting Fabian’s (2008) description of ethnography as “processes by which observations and
experiences become documents on which we may base the interpretations and insights we call
ethnography” (p. 4). That definition reveals ethnography as a process in-between multiple
discourses and expectations, with which postcritical ethnography grapples.

For postcritical ethnographers (see, e.g., Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004), traditional
ethnography (see, e.g., Geertz, 1973) as “representation of culture” is limited by traditional
ethnography’s assumption that the world can be represented objectively. Those same authors
critique critical ethnography (see, e.g., Madison, 2012; J. Thomas, 1993) for its continued
reliance on similar foundational assumptions about culture and ethnography (see Spencer, 2007).
According to Lather (2007), postcritical ethnography asks a paradigmatic altering question: How
ethnographic thought might be thought about differently. Lather stated postcritical
ethnography’s aim as

Think[ing] against technical thought and method and towards another way that keeps in
play . . . heterogeneity . . . endorse complexity, partial truths and multiple subjectivities . .
. bending the rules with respect for the rules, a certain respectful mimicking in order to
twist, queer science to come up with a better story of itself. (pp. 482, 483, 480)

Beginning from a postfoundation position, postcritical ethnography assumes that
discourses of theories and discourses of practices are intimately coupled (i.e., they are reflexive
discourses); that their coupling can have positive or negative consequences for how subjects are represented ethnographically; and, that those representations influence understanding of people and institutions. This view is not the well-worn path of ethnographic reflexivity concerning researchers’ relationships with participants. Postcritical ethnography questions the researcher’s (contingent) foundations, and the foundations of research. Linstead (1993), for example, noted that postcritical ethnography “throws into question its own authority as an account . . . point[ing] to the possibility of an infinitude of representations and accounts” (p. 113). The central practical question facing postcritical ethnographers concerns the necessities of locating themselves and their works; that is, how, as Lather (2007) wondered, “we move towards ethnographic practices that are responsible to what is arising out of both becoming and passing away” (p. 487). The only satisfying answer at this time is disclosure of researchers’ assumptions, grounds, and turning points in an investigation.

Postcritical ethnographers, Koro-Ljungberg (2004) argued, are “guided by a set of practical problems or by the complex notions of the social world rather than the foundational assumptions embedded in a particular paradigm” (p. 603). Such starting positions, however, do not erase a commitment to theory. As Koro-Ljungberg and Greckhamer (2005) explained, “We cannot envision rigorous . . . research without any theoretical connections” (p. 286). Theory “not only contains within it a method to arrange, prioritize, and legitimize . . . but also provides researchers with a space in which to plan and take control of the data and the research process” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2004, p. 602). However, in the absence of convincing arguments about the value of foundational assumptions, the “ever present influences of other [theoretical] perspectives and layered cultural modifications, [leave] stable theoretical positions . . . somewhat questionable” (Koro-Ljungberg & Greckhamer, p. 291). In place of foundational assumptions
and their implications for the role of theory in qualitative studies, Koro-Ljungberg proposed that researchers take hold of opportunities provided “in the middle of different paradigms, discourses, validities, expectations, and goals, blending elements from both binaries, achieving simultaneous approaches within and against” (p. 605).

 Historically, open reflection on what ethnographers did to produce ethnography rarely entered discourses of ethnography, much less the text of a study; instead, “ethnographic accounts [were] assessed on a take-it-or-leave it basis. . . . The ethnographer provide[d] a finished product and never anything less than a finished product” (Spencer, 2007, p. 446). Questioning of foundations means that no longer can there be shared assumptions about “proper” ethnographic research foci, designs, and/or products; in the absence of commonly accepted frameworks for assessing ethnographic texts, authors have a responsibility to “make the research process, knowledge and value priorities, methodological decision points, and argumentative logic as open and as visible as possible” (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009, p. 697; see also Flybverg, 2004). More will be said about the matter in Chapter 3, but here it is useful to note that this study pursued an emergent research design.

 During this study’s emergent path, theories and research form far-flung domains were brought into frame; not all of them were welcomed, and all of them failed to provide a comprehensive account of the CCG at one level or another. The constellations of ideas and concepts employed in this report are present because each serves a function, and because they hang together to achieve useful practical and theoretical conclusions. Differences and similarities between perspectives are noted when significant, but attempts to smooth rough edges in-between ideas or concepts are minimal. Because there always are many ways to read a text, and this texts encourages different readings of events reported (as well the text itself), whether
choices made as the study proceeded were the practical way to go, of course, is debatable. For the conditions faced, and the aims of the report, the perspectives, concepts, and foci of this study are appropriate, but are not exclusive. The following section provides contextual background for the study that begins to demonstrate the many conditions of the research site, leading to the theoretical, analytical, and methodological choices describe above.

A Stakeholder Discourse: Boulder, Colorado Open Space

Within discourses and practices, categories link individuals to groups, and relations to symbols. Discourses and practices are culturally informed intertextual representations and doings in-between localities and the larger world; in other words, meanings of a category-in-use have traces of global discourses in which the category is meaningful, local ways of interpreting those discourses, and, thereby, unique local uses and meanings of broadly common symbols. For example, what it means to be a “stakeholder,” a particular kind of stakeholder, and a particular kind of stakeholder in a given situation have broad commonalities and specific differences. Locality matters for multiple reason, but, first and foremost, because issues, histories, and structures of a participation process are all unique to the particular, relevant context. This section provides background on the relevant discourses necessary to draw informed conclusions about uses and interpretations of stakeholder categories in the context of the CCG discussed in this text. To do so, the CCG must be considered in light of the general issue(s) at stake (specific issues are discussed later), the history of Open Space governance leading to the CCG, and the design ideals of the CCG process.

The CCG process was formed to address a planning need for a landscape of historical significance beyond its relatively small physical size; the story of Boulder Open Space is the story of the City of Boulder, a tale of the modern environmental conservation movement, and a
narrative of contemporary challenges of “wilderness” park management. The path to the CCG as a concept was embedded in a long-range planning process that, in intent and effect, was already transforming the governance of Open Space, with those changes occurring under state-of-the-art park management planning frameworks, with those frameworks placing participation at their center. Finally, the CCG was a normatively ideal model of community-based participation that succeeded in drawing participants from all relevant categories to the planning process, with those categories used and interpreted with the parties’ shared and unique discourses. The following sections survey those background conditions of the CCG.

**The Value(s) of Open Space**

It is difficult to say with specificity what is the value of the land known as “Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks;” it means many things to many people, as seen throughout this report. More than 45,000 acres, Boulder’s Open Space is a ring of limitedly developed land surrounding the City of Boulder,. different parts of which are relevant to different people in different ways. This report considers only one parcel of Open Space, but the land in question is the most significant in the Open Space system; its relevance to the city, as a whole, cannot be overstated. For purposes of planning for the land, the part of Open Space that is focal in this study was called the “West Trail Study Area” (WTSA). Totaling 11,250 acres, the WTSA is an ecological and geological transition zone that contains low-lying parries rising sharply to mountain peaks (see Weber & Wittman, 2011). As a result of civic action that began a year after Boulder’s 1898 incorporation, the WTSA exists today in a mostly natural state as the “crown jewel” of a globally significant local conservation program (for detailed histories of Boulder Open Space, see Reilly-McNellan, n.d.; Robertson, n.d.). Stretching five miles, the WTSA is
known as Boulder’s “mountain backdrop” (see Figure 1.1), and it dominates the city’s physical and symbolic identity.

Open Space is not principally a resource to be exploited, but a representation of Boulder; the city’s monument to its history, a symbol of the community’s values and ethics, and a calling card to the world. Each of those meanings is represented in numerous ways in local discourses, but there is no better example of a single point at which all those discourses come together, than the Crest of the City of Boulder. The Crest of the City of Boulder (see Figure 1.2), like many other cities’ crests, is set in a circle, one interpretation of which, in relation to the City of Boulder, is what the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (City of Boulder, 2005) called the “Open Space buffers [that] define the community” (p. 5). Boulder Open Space, literally and figuratively, defines the city, shaping its physical and cultural qualities; the ring of Open Space distinguishing Boulder also is the city’s symbolic center. Those interpretations also are represented on the city’s crest.

Figure 1.1. The City of Boulder, Colorado, and the West Trail Study Area. Note: The WTSA contained most of the undeveloped land in this image, from South Boulder Creek (curved line, page left) to about Wonderland Lake (dark blob, lower page right). The remainder of the land in this image is non-WTSA City of Boulder Open Space, Boulder County Open Space, or State of Colorado park land. Source: Google Maps, 2011.
Dominating the center of the crest is a representation of the internationally recognized landscape of mesa, valleys, and mountain peaks anchored by the towering Flatiron formations that, collectively, are known as the “mountain backdrop,” and, in this report, as the WTSA. Below the illustration are the words “City of Boulder,” with no boundary marked between the image of the mountains and the city’s name. Open Space, thus, flows into and is of the city itself; the WTSA and the city are indivisible. Given the importance of Open Space and the WTSA to the City of Boulder and its residents, any action on the part of government to alter the land or its uses draws attention. The symbolic value of the WTSA invites differences of opinion, few of them rational in the sense that they can be discretely measured.

*Figure 1.2. Crest of the City of Boulder, Colorado. Source: City of Boulder, Colorado.*

In addition to the physical magnificence of the WTSA (see Figure 1.3), and its role in the social and cultural history of Boulder, the land frequently is called “Boulder’s backyard” (see Figure 1.4). That phrase/symbol captures two of the strongest dimensions of stakeholder interests in and relations to the WTSA. First, the description implies ownership, such that the WTSA is not just “land” or even “public land.” For locals (and some non-locals), Open Space and the WTSA are “our land;” property fought for, purchased, and preserved by its owners, the residents of Boulder. The human bonds to the WTSA are immense. Second, the idea of the
WTSA as a “backyard” means that it is a place for play and enjoyment, an ideal embedded in the Open Space Charter establishing the program, which also can cut against the equally important concern for conservation. Use and protection are always in tension in public land management; in Boulder, as in other places, perceptions about that tension and how to manage it are changing rapidly (see Powell & Vagias, 2012).

Figure 1.3. The mountain backdrop.  
Note: The WTSA is large and the geography is rolling, making it difficult to photograph the entire area. This picture shows approximately two thirds of the WTSA highlands. The remainder extends north (page right). Long’s Peak is the faint summit in the background page right. Source: Jeff Mitton. Used with permission.

Figure 1.4. Advertisement with mountain backdrop imagery. Source: Author.
Between 1999 and 2010 (see Public Information Corporation, 1999; City of Boulder, Department of Open Space and Mountain Parks, 2010), survey responses to questions about the purposes of Open Space have shifted from an even split between conservation and recreation (23% to 22%), to favoring recreation by nearly 10% (24% to 31%). During that same period, perceptions of Open Space as an important buffer between other communities and the wilderness west of Boulder have fallen by nearly half, from 30% to 18%. At an individual level, perceptions of the purposes of Open Space influence how people use the land, and, there, as well, changes are afoot. The primary use of Open Space consistently has been for hiking and walking, but recent years have seen an increase (from 84% to 92%) in people who described their hike as “hike,” whereas “enjoying nature” has fallen by nearly two thirds (from 17% to 6%).

Moreover, between 1999 and 2010, new uses for Open Space were introduced and/or existing uses increased in number. Overall, visitation to Open Space has increased from approximately 2.8 million annually (see Zeller, Zinn, & Manfredo, 1993) to nearly 5 million (Vaske, Shelby, & Donnelly, 2009). Most people visiting Open Space do so in areas of the WTSA. Not only have hikers increased in number, but dog walking expanded twofold (from 7% to 13%), and bicycling has grown by more than 50% (from 20% to 32%). Taken together, these statistics demonstrate shifting social, cultural, and symbolic meanings of Open Space that, when performed on the ground, can lead to visitor conflicts.

Survey respondents have constantly rated OSMP’s management of Open Space highly, and as adequately meeting both conservation and recreation goals; in a recent survey, nearly 80% described the department’s efforts at balancing competing uses as “about right,” and 96% described their experience in Open Space as “good” or “very good” (City of Boulder, Department of Open Space and Mountain Parks, 2010). Users, however, experienced variable
levels of “conflict” when in Open Space. Only 10% of respondents thought that conflicts were minimal overall, more than 30% perceived conflicts with cyclists, and just over 20% perceived conflicts with dogs (City of Boulder, Department of Open Space and Mountain Parks, 2010).

More significantly, between 2004 and 2010, the impact on the “pleasantness” of being in Open Space and encountering a cyclist fell by half (from 60% to 30%), and dog encounters were less pleasant by 10%.

Finally, a study conducted by Vaske and Donnelly (2007) differentiated two types of conflict experienced by Open Space visitors: (a) *interpersonal conflict*, which “occurs when the presence or behavior of an individual or group interferes with the goals of another individual or group”; and (b) *social value conflict*, which “occurs between groups who may not share similar norms/values about an activity” (p. 2). Vaske and Donnelly found that 14% of conflicts in Open Space were based on social values, and that nearly 60% were based on a combination of interpersonal contact and social values. Hence, only about 25% of conflicts among Open Space users were based exclusively on direct encounters, a number that might be much smaller, as only visitor accounts were used as data, not observed situations.7

Differences in ideals about Open Space’s purposes and uses, and perceptions about uses in light of those purposes, are a mix of considered reflection and strong biases. As a result, what management actions should be taken in response to and in anticipation of those conflicts, primarily, are not questions of technical changes, but of relational changes. In recent years, major changes to the technical management of Open Space have thrown into relief differences among the land’s stakeholders, and conflicts over management of Open Space, increasingly, have grown tense. The following section discusses the major outlines of changes in the
governance of Open Space, the social consequences of those changes, and how the changes lead to the creation of the CCG.

**Governing Open Space**

In 2000, through what, for some stakeholders, was a difficult transition, the City of Boulder, Department of Mountain Parks, was merged with the City of Boulder, Department of Open Space. The process consolidated management, but, perhaps more importantly, extended protections in the Open Space Charter to the system’s historic core; the mountain backdrop, or the WTSA. At the time of the merger, the new OSMP had no systematic approach to the management of resources under its stewardship. Following the merger, OSMP’s first task was the development of an agenda for managing use of the system (distinct from natural resource management). The agency naming the planning document the *Visitor Master Plan* (*VMP*; City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005).

No weak statement, the *VMP* opened with the statement that it was “a framework that defines how we [OSMP] can continue to provide high quality recreational experiences while protecting and preserving significant natural areas and valuable habitats” (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005, p. 1). The word “define” was not used rhetorically; the *VMP* described itself as “more than words on paper” (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005, p. 1). Four years in development, the *VMP* is a robust text, the details of which will be noted as they become relevant to this study. At the outset, four of the most significant parts of the VMP are noted below because of their importance to the historical arch to the CCG.

First, the *VMP* established “management zones,” dividing Open Space into regions with specific purposes that restricted other uses. A new creation, first stated in the *VMP*, management zones define where people can and cannot travel, and what they can and cannot do in various
parts of the system. Open Space stakeholders often described such changes as affecting “historic access,” which meant, “How I/we usually use the land, and with who or what (e.g., dogs and bikes).” Second, the VMP committed OSMP to a regime of “adaptive management,” which “monitors visitor experience, visitor infrastructure, and resource conditions, assesses the effectiveness of management actions, and revises them based on new information gained from research and experience” (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005, p. 30). Third, in light of the significance of Open Space to Boulder, and the intensity of human relationships with its parts, the VMP committed OSMP to being a “partner with the community in . . . decision-making and stewardship efforts” (p. 6). A citizen-led project from its inception, Open Space always has been highly participatory; development of the VMP involved almost 60 points at which the plan was reviewed in public, including three stakeholder roundtables that developed key definitions and policies. Finally, the VMP was a policy document, but it also was an agenda for translating its conceptual plans into on-the-ground action. Instead of blanket policies, the land was divided into “trail study areas” (TSA), and applications of policies were determined on a case-by-case basis in light of existing conditions, desired and supported uses of an area, and long-term goals.

With such issues in mind, immediately after adoption of the VMP, OSMP began the TSA processes. The first two TSAs conducted were top-down with intermittent moments for public participation though written and spoken comment on draft plans. Those TSA processes were not quite “partnering,” but neither were they backroom deals. Outcomes, however, were contested and criticized, with parties still raising objections years after the fact. Some concerns about the TSA plans were laments of those positions not satisfied; others can be tied to changes to “historic access” wrought by the VMP. Regardless of the reason, unhappiness with the first two TSAs was widespread, and, in 2008, the original plan was revised; whereas the VMP named eight
TSAs, the revision gathered them into four areas based on geographic location to the city center, with those already completed constituting the “South TSA.” The reorganization of the TSAs produced what is here called the “West TSA,” which the director of OSMP explained was “so critical and complex that business as usual just will not work” (Patton, OSBT 4/22/09). For the WTSA, OSMP decided to move more directly into the goal of “partnering” with the community in what became the CCG.

The Community Collaborative Group

The body of this report discusses the CCG in depth; here, it is important to note only a few qualities of the process, its sources and support, and its formal and informal goals. “Sources and support” refers to the origins of the CCG process, and the status of the process in the network of Open Space governance. As discussed previously, relations among Open Space stakeholders, and governance of the program, had been growing increasingly difficult since the merger and initiation of the VMP process. By design, the CCG was a response to those challenges, and, in that respect, it is paradigmatic of naturally emergent public participation processes. Although, in light of the CCG, this report argues that public participation processes should be proactively promoted prior to dangerous levels of conflict occurring, most literature suggests that such processes are developed when a problem is faced, and “business as usual” will just not work. A related issue, for participation in general, and the CCG specifically, is who organizes and supports the process (see, e.g., Button & Ryfe, 2005). The CCG was organized by OSMP, the government agency responsible for managing Open Space. In a context such as that of the WTSA planning process, only the agency has the authority to constitute a formal public process, but such a process could be promoted by the public or the managing agency. External
promotion may result in the establishment of a participatory process, but, ideally, the agency, itself, recognizes a need for doing things differently.

On the question of purpose, the was adopted as the planning process for the WTSA; the group’s purpose, as defined in planning documents, was to offer consensus recommendations about policy for the WTSA to the OSBT. At another level, the CCG was an effort to attend to the relational (i.e., social-value) conflicts that were making planning and management of Open Space unnecessarily contentious. The latter purpose repeatedly was mentioned during the process but was not a formally stated objective of the CCG. This report cannot help but attend to policy and policy discourses, but the analysis is squarely focused on the relational dimensions; it is in talk about policies and processes that stakeholder categories/relations are defined and redefined. The following sections introduce the case study approaches used to isolate the CCG process for study but to maintain the inherent connection to the contextual backgrounds informing the uses and meaning of categories.

The Case and Methods

This report can be called a “case study,” a term used here in a meaningful analytic sense. Case study research, generally, is concerned with the search for order and meaning in symbolic (inter)action (see George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; A. J. Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010; Stake, 1995; Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2009, 2012), and, therefore, it is an appropriate approach for this study of symbolic categories. Case study research, however, is “not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (Stake, 1995, p. 443). G. Thomas (2011) has described a case study as consisting of two interdependent parts: (a) the subject of a case, the “practical, historical unity” studied (e.g., phenomenon, organization, or setting); and, (b) the object of the case, the “analytical or theoretical frame” (p. 514). The object
of this case study—stakeholder categories—was discussed above; this section defines the case study subject, methods used to address the object through the subject, and the conceptual tools (e.g., categorization, dis/identification, and representation) employed to connect the subject with the object.

**The Subject and Object**

At first blush, the subject this research would appear to be the CCG, given that the purpose of this study is to consider uses and influences of categories in the context of the CCG. However, to make sense of categories-in-use during the CCG, account must be taken discourses in which those categories are relevant. In this respect, the CCG, itself, could not stand as “the case,” because such a boundary would divorce that process from a central object of the study: discourses preceding and following the CCG. With the CCG as “the case,” questions about how stakeholders at the table talked about categories relevant to discourses of Open Space could be considered, but influences of discourses on the CCG process, and the CCG’s impact on those discourses, would be cut out of the analytic frame. In defining the subject of the case, it, thus, is necessary to step back and attend to a larger sphere that contains all the relevant pieces.

Perhaps the best way to describe the subject discussed in this report is to call the subject of the investigation the “relevant local discourses.” By attending to discourses relevant to the parties to the CCG, this study of the CCG can avoid the limitations of structural determinants of the case (e.g., the community, the group, or the process) that could distort interpretations by excluding certain events (if the frame is too small) without opening the text to the flood of potential variables that could overwhelm small but analytically important events (if the frame is too large). With local discourses as the subject of the study, analysis and interpretation can follow uses and interpretations of categories in-between individuals, across group boundaries,
back and forth through time, and directly connect the local with the global. One of the challenges of such an approach, however, is that when entering a new discourse (as I did when beginning the research reported here), relevant local discourses cannot be known in advance and, therefore, such studies are necessarily emergent in design.

The body of this report tells the story of the CCG, from its planning through the final conversation among its members, alongside an analysis of how Open Space stakeholders communicatively constructed meanings and values of Open Space stakeholder categories, and the influence of communication with and about categories on the CCG process, the WTSA Plan, and the long-term goals of the VMP. The principal aim of this report, however, is not to assess the CCG from a foundational or normative stance, but to learn from the CCG, as case studies are suited to do (see Flyvbjerg, 2006). The study reconstructs the CCG to reflect on the stakeholder concept and stakeholder relations by examining communicative practices of categorization, dis/identification, and representation constituting symbols and meanings of local stakeholders’ collective interests and identities. Throughout the project, the starting points and targets of this report, although relatively stable, have shifted to accommodate the particularities of the CCG and its relevant discourses, sometimes leading to revision of the conceptual tools employed, terms and actors foregrounded in relevant discourses, and even the final structure of this report. Ability to allow those elements to emerge without losing sight of the primary objective of this report (i.e., practical assessment and reconstruction of the transformative thesis), as explained below, is rooted in commitments to ethnography and discourse analysis as “methods.”

**Ethnography and Discourse Analysis**

There is no agreement as to what is discourse analysis, even among those most likely to label themselves as “discourse analysts” (see, e.g., Cameron, 2001 Fitch & Sander, 2004;
Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001). From normative approaches of conversation analysis (see, e.g., Pomerantz & Mendelbaum, 2005), to critiques offered by critical discourse analysis (see, e.g., Fairclough, 2001), to European philosophers who describe their work as discourse analysis (see, e.g., S. Mills, 2004), “discourse analysis” is employed in diverse ways. As used here, *discourse analysis* is an investigation of meaning at and above the level of the phrase, and communicative practices through which such meaning is created and recreated (K. Tracy, 2001). A qualitative approach to studying meaning-in-interaction, this type of discourse analysis grounds its analysis in textual data (e.g., talk and documents), conducting interpretative readings of how meanings are created and recreated, and how meanings affect and are affected by situated communicative practices. Discourse and communication are not equivalent, but they are closely aligned concepts, often are distinguished by reference to “little-d discourse” and “large-D discourse” (see Johnstone, 2008) respectively. Here, “communication” and “discourse” are used following Jian, Schmisseur, and Fairhurst’s (2008) useful distinction that “actors operate in communication and through discourse . . . discourse is always realized in text [i.e., communication] that is organized interactively, linguistically, and cognitively” (p. 314).

In this study, two approaches grounded in discourse analysis, but reaching for something offered by ethnography, were employed to structure a methodological approach suited to emergent study of the CCG as that process emerged. Specifically, the practically oriented, ethnographically informed approaches of AIDA (K. Tracy, 2005) and the theoretically directed DHA (Wodak, 2001) are coupled at their principal point of disagreement: how theory should be employed in analysis. K. Tracy’s (2005) AIDA approach emerges from ideals in practical theory and, therefore, “does not presume that there are known principles of good conduct that are universally applicable” (p. 230), whereas Wodak’s (2001) approach takes the opposite position,
holding that “grand theories serve as foundations” (p. 70). Useful truths, undoubtedly, lay somewhere in-between those two poles, and this report moves in-between the two, attempting to keep up with the swings of the CCG.

With respect to data and data collection, discourses analysis writ large is a diverse collection of ideals, with K. Tracy’s (2005) and Wodak’s (2001) perspectives representing two of the most common approaches. AIDA is rooted in analysis of transcribed interactional talk to discover interesting phenomena, around which conceptual arguments about communicative practices can be constructed. DHA analyzes the content of large collections of written texts (e.g., news articles) for themes in social discourses that speak to theoretical concerns. In this report, both approaches are employed in traditional and not so traditional ways. Using a (nearly) complete transcript of all the CCG’s meetings, along with a robust corpus of diverse and detailed ethnographic and archival data, communicative practices during the CCG were analyzed at the interactional level, and at the level of social discourses.

Finally, ethnographic literatures are a contested discourse that offers little assistance concerning data collection and analysis. Existing texts on ethnography describe at very general levels principal methods of data collection and analysis as observation, interviews, document analysis, and thematic coding. Moreover, neither K. Tracy nor Wodak detailed what it means to do ethnography alongside discourse analysis. K. Tracy (2005) explained ethnography’s purpose as developing “an understanding of both how participants talk with each other in the practice . . . and how they talk (or write) about each other and themselves” (p. 227), and Wodak (2001) noted only that the “historical context is always analyzed and integrated into the interpretation” (p. 70). As detailed in Chapter 3, all of those practices, and others, were employed to collect data, make interpretations, and to guide analysis, but the CCG Transcript, and close textual analysis of its
content, are the primary resources drawn on in this report. The following section describes the conceptual tools used to make sense of those data.

**Categories in/as Communicative Practice(s)**

A great strength of discourse analysis relying on transcribed talk is that arguments are made in light of data that, themselves, are mostly complete (no communication exists independent of other communication) and presented to the reader. Discourse analysts engage in that practice with excerpts from transcripts evidencing some regular feature of interaction in their data, and they employ common concepts (although individual researchers may define those concepts differently) to facilitate generalizable developments. This study extends those principles to longer conversations and ethnographic narratives of those conversations. The approach taken works, primarily, by quotations from the transcript to tell the story of the CCG, and demonstrating regular features of communication concepts along the way. In the remainder of this section, the conceptual vocabulary that guided analysis and reconstruction of the CCG is briefly surveyed; the next chapter below details those concepts.

Invoked in all manner of research, and variously interpreted within those studies, the term “categories” usually is employed loosely to describe people with similar qualities (e.g., race and gender), cultures, occupations, offices, and so forth. Sacks (1967, 1972) offered a detailed (and still state-of-the-art) normative model of how categories functioned in talk and texts, their influence on interaction and outcomes, and their meanings in social discourses. Described as culturally and situationally meaningful terms that structure interaction and interpretation thereof, Sacks’s ideals of categories are adopted here for their sensibility and emerging interpretive extensions (see Stokoe, 2012).
Identification as used in this report is the communicative association of one’s self with a category or other symbol of a collective (see Woodward, 2003). A common term in research of many stripes, identification usually does not carry with it much conceptual leverage, and it rarely is studied (or theorized) as a communicative practice. An exception to both rules is Cheney’s (1983a, 1983b, 1991) perspective on organizational identification as a communicative process that produces, reproduces, and challenges meanings of categories. Cheney’s work is used to describe processes of identification, but Holmer-Nadesan’s (1996) distinction between identification, counteridentification, and disidentification better captures the diverse ways that people can communicatively relate to a discourse, and categories relevant to that discourse.

Finally, a collective cannot speak for itself; all meanings of a collective are representations, communication through which a person or group speaks for others. Saward (2010) called such a perspective the “representative claim,” contrasting the claim’s fluidity with understanding of representation as a role, and he offered some tools for better understanding representation from that perspective. That representation is a claim is a useful but incomplete ideal, for it highlights only the claim maker; representation also needs to be understood as an ascription, the claim that someone or something is representative. In addition to representation as claim and ascription, Saward’s distinction between formal and informal representative claims is elemental, and serves, in this study, as a means to begin to differentiate types of stakeholders making representative claims and ascriptions.

Together, communicative practices of categorization, identification, and representation constitute and reconstitute meanings of categories/collectives by defining and redefining members’ and non-members’ common issues and different interests. Collectively, I describe processes and practices of making and remaking meanings of stakeholder categories as
stakeholder/representation. Stakeholders do not exist “out there”; individuals are named (i.e., categorized) as stakeholders by themselves and others when representations of self or others as (or as not) stakeholders are made, descriptions that individuals may or may not believe, or with which they may or may not identify in various ways.

**Conclusion**

A stakeholder does not exist in a material sense and, therefore, the hunt for it is continuous, a claim that will be thoroughly evidenced with original data in the body of this report. The analysis will show how all manner of membership and meanings of Open Space stakeholders were made and remade during the CCG, and I will offer practical–theoretical tools for governing with and researching with the stakeholder concept. Ultimately, however, the study has one central objective: to convince the reader that the stakeholder always already is beyond capture, control, and exploitation, but, nonetheless, that it is necessary to pursue, describe, and seek meanings of this complex and consequential social category.

Chapter 2 expands on comments made in this chapter concerning communication, collectivity, and categories by defining the stakeholder concept and surveying literature about it; and, by reviewing perspectives on communicative practices of categorization, dis/identification, and representation. Chapter 3 discusses this study’s emergent research design, providing details about the ethnographic and discourse-analytic approach(es) taken in this study; presents an accounting of data collection and data reduction/analysis; and introduces the structure of, participants to, and issues at stake in the CCG. The heart of the dissertation, Chapters 4 through 8, reconstructs the CCG in its entirety, from its planning stages in April 2009 to its conclusion in January 2011.
Chapter 4 begins at the beginning (i.e., planning the CCG), and shows how participants to conversations at that time constructed general meanings of an Open Space stakeholder categories, criteria for membership in those categories, and the values of stakeholders so categorized. Chapter 5 focuses on the CCG members themselves, covering the first months of the CCG, during which time were revealed the multiple discourses from which meanings of stakeholder categories constituted and contested in communication. I strive in that chapter to show how different interpretations of categories can occur within the same discourse, and in-between discourses of personal histories, policy, and participation processes. Chapter 6 progresses to the midpoint of the CCG, with an analytic focus on how the role of “CCG representative” was constructed and contested in-between different discourses. Chapter 6 expands beyond the CCG members themselves to examine how interpretations of the role of people categorized as “representatives” differed among CCG members, the public, and decision makers. Chapter 7 moves away from direct attention to meanings of categories to look at how meanings of stakeholders were constructed in performances of representation. The most “foundational” of all the chapters, that analysis works to bring to light some of the many ways representative claims and ascriptions constitute representatives and the represented. Chapter 8 brings the story and analysis of the CCG to a close by reflecting on how CCG members were categorized by each other in two contexts where their policy proposals were presented, and by recounting a discussion among CCG members about language demonstrating the importance of categories beyond the definition of group membership. In the vocabulary of this report, the final chapter examines how CCG members sought to categorize their work, and their discussions about the practical importance of that work.
The final chapter of the dissertation draws theoretical, practical, and methodological conclusions from the study for the stakeholder concept, collectivity, and conceptualizing and engaging with stakeholders. Additionally, the value of practical theory to the study of participation and general lessons for practical participation research are discussed. Finally, general methodological lessons learned and constraints of the study are discussed.
Chapter 1 Notes

1Quotations from data used in this report come from multiple sources. Excerpts from recorded speech are cited with the last name of the speaker, or preceded by the speaker’s first name, followed by the group meeting from which the quote was taken and the date of the meeting. A full list of meetings from which quoted data were taken is available in Appendix A, and Appendix B contains a list of all data sources.

2I was invited by Open Space and Mountain Park staff members to their internal review of the CCG without conditions, but because all participants did not know my status as researcher, I did not make recordings of the meeting and do not to quote from the staff’s discussion.

3Whether relational, policy, or institutional change is sought varies by type of participation process as normatively defined.

4By “relevant categories,” I mean those categories whose meaning is significant to the participatory process. If, for example, gender is not an important category to the issue at hand, it does not make sense to interrogate differences in the meanings of “man” and “woman.” Local categories that are meaningful to a particular issue cannot be defined in the abstract but they include such interests and identities as student, worker, conservationist, neighbor, employer, developer, and the like.

5Other interpretative frames that were appropriate for this study but were not used in constructing the approach taken here included, among others, argumentative policy analysis, community studies, group development and decision making, organizational culture and change, and critical theory. Hints of each of those approaches can be seen in this report, but as frameworks, they were either too specific or too general to be of use across this report. That they were not employed in this study does not mean that they could not be used to explore the same data in the future. Those and other approaches are not incompatible with perspectives developed in this report but they were not ideal for the cut of the subject presented in this text.

6As part of this research, I collected hundreds of promotional images (e.g., advertisements, brochures, and guides) and other media (e.g., letterheads and website banners) containing representations of the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) as central figures. The primary feature of the WTSA is the Flatiron formations. Here, it is worth noting that representations of the Flatirons are used in many ways, from advertising duct-cleaning services to promoting the University of Colorado Boulder. Samples from my Flatiron’s Imagery Database, as well as many additional resources, can be found at http://comm.colorado.edu/~konieczka/WTSA/wtsaspash.html

7Vaske and Donnelly’s (2007) report also may have underestimated the degree of social value conflict because only 35% of the surveys were conducted in the WTSA, a far more socially significant and higher use area than are other parts of Boulder’s Open Space system.
CHAPTER 2

STAKEHOLDER(S): A CONCEPTUAL CONSTELLATION

Traditionally, in both hypo-deductive and grounded research, theoretical definition of the problem or question proceeds empirical study, with the purpose of research in those approaches being to assess and improve theory. As noted in Chapter 1, postcritical ethnographic practices invert the traditional approach by foregrounding practical situations, and by directing researchers to draw on multiple theoretical perspectives to understand problems from a holistic perspective. Assessment of theories may occur in postcritical ethnographic studies, but the principal purpose of such investigations is to understand practice by pointing out the limitations of any single theory to account for the complexities of real-world situations. A position with wide-reaching implications for the design and conduct of empirical research, among the most challenging implications of a postcritical approach is how to employ theories to understand practice, without allowing theory to define what is and is not ideal in practice. To date, there exist no clear guidelines for theoretically grounding research that seeks, as this study does, to sustain dialogue in-between theories and practices.

This chapter details theoretical backgrounds and assumptions that, in some cases, preceded initiation of the present study, and, in other cases, were adopted during the research to make sense of the practice(s) observed, as well as to fill in gaps in the study’s theoretical “foundations.” The chapter does not move in a linear sense toward identification of gaps in the literature that the report will fill, nor is the purpose of the chapter to argue that one perspective or another will permit a more accurate understanding of the events observed; instead, starting with
assumptions and concerns that predate the research behind this report, the chapter presents a constellation of theoretical ideals and concepts that came together as a result of grappling with the ideals of extant theory in light of practices discussed in the body of this report. The chapter presents, in a logical order, ideas and tools that facilitated analysis and reconstruction of a coherent conceptual narrative about the Community Collaborative Group’s (CCG) 2-year lifespan in light of the study’s overarching concern with relational transformation through participation. The chapter, thus, provides resources that, in various configurations, are drawn on in the body of the report to rationalize/explain what transpired during the CCG.

The chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first section surveys theories of collective identity. Collective identity is useful ground for reflecting on relational transformation in the context of participation, but the area of study suffers from many limitations. Among the most significant constraints of extant ideals of collectivity is reliance on the notion that collective identity depends on the presence of “shared interests.” Shared interests, of course, do exist in all collectives, but, as argued below, as the foundation for collective identity, similarity is a decidedly weak and misdirecting construct. The second section argues that the “stakeholder concept” can be employed to improve the ability of extant perspectives of collectivity to account for the presence of difference that already always is a part of collective identity. As a symbol of collectivity, the meaning of stakeholder is without objective referent, and it is open to multiple interpretations of legitimacy and value, qualities that compel a rethinking of what it means to have shared interests. Although spurring new directions for reflection on collective identity, the stakeholder concept remains a highly theoretical construct with limited empirical tractability. The final section of this chapter suggests that collective identity, in general, and the stakeholder concept, in particular, can best be understood and examined by looking at how symbols of
collectivity are constructed and contested in communicative practices of categorization, dis/identification, and representation. I argue that by studying who says what to whom about symbols of collectivity, a fine-grained study of similarities and differences within and between groups can be created, and that such attention to language and communication will facilitate better assessments of relational transformation through participation than currently exist.

**Categories, Communication, and Collectivity**

Distinctions between approaches to collectivity turn on different understandings of ways collectives exist in meanings, symbols mediating those meanings, and relations constituted through that mediation. From any direction (assuming that they can be separated) the subject of collectivity never can escape the symbolic, and, therefore, how an approach conceptualizes symbols dramatically influences theoretical, empirical, and practical interpretations. There are, of course, differences in ways that symbols are conceptualized in collectivity studies, but there also is vast agreement on how symbols of collectivity, in the ideal, are to be interpreted. Across a range of collectivity theory, grounded research, and everyday practices, the symbols of collectives are presented as static, essentialized, and oppositional. The absolute meaning of “we/us” pervades statements and research on collectivity, with “they/them” typically the foil for understanding meanings of collectivity as us/we, and strife between the two sides of “us” and “them” being the site of analytic attention. As discussed below, the dominance of such ideals are consequences of their utility under certain historical intellectual and situational conditions, and those ideals may not be appropriate for all contemporary collectives and situations that they face. Paradoxically, however, prevailing ideals cannot be completely abandoned, in theory or practice.

Playing on the idea of absolute shared meaning of the symbol we/us that structures much contemporary collectivity research, I call the dominant perspective *consens-us collectivity*, to
conceptualize the we/us symbol of shared interests as singular, absolute, and binary (in relation to non-members). Employing different terms, most collectivity theory and empirical research rests on consens-us assumptions about the we/us symbol in abstract or practical terms.

Paradigmatic consens-us perspectives on collectivity include social identity theory (SIT) and self-categorization theory (SCT). Consensus-us collectivity perspectives have strong foundational stances that paper over difference, indeterminacy, and dialogue; they currently are being challenged in many areas. I call approaches that take a more (but not complete) postfoundational stance dissens-us collectivity because they treat the symbolic we/us as social and grounded in difference, subject to contestation, and meaningful in context. However, limitations continue to persist in applying dissens-us approaches.

First, the idea of dissens-us collectivity is not so much a counterpoint to consens-us, nor a specific perspective; it is a constellation of ideals across disciplines and practices. From multiple directions and various perspectives, such ideals search for understandings of collectivity after shared meaning, common interests, and a static world. To date, those efforts have been fractured, with no organization of dissens-us literatures within or across areas. Second, even the best dissens-us efforts have so far failed to shake loose the deeply seeded ideals of the symbolic we/us that is demonstrated in consens-us. Third, almost all this work remains theoretical, without empirical or practical detail. Finally, research practices continue to move theoretically, methodologically, and contextually with the grain of consens-us perspectives.

Given the limitations identified, ideals of dissens-us collectivity, at present, can offer an orientation towards collectivity and symbols but not a framework for analysis. In the remainder of this section, ideals of consens-us and dissens-us collectivity are briefly examined, and their strengths and constraints are noted.
Consens-us Collectivity

The notion that symbols and meanings of collectivity are singular, opposed, and essentialized grows directly out of traditional approaches to personal identity (Rose, 1998). When identity is conceived as *being*, boundaries between “me” and “you” must be conceptually strong and practically managed. During most of the 20th century, group action, if it was considered to be relevant at all, was viewed from a position of individual psychology overlooking social dimensions of collective behavior (see Hogg & Abrams, 1999; Poole, 1998). In the 1970s, taking the position that identity exists on a continuum between personal and social self, Tajfel (1978) and colleagues developed and investigated what social identity theory (SIT), a social-psychological approach to collectivity.

SIT holds that individuals can interact with others on the basis on a continuum between interpersonal and intergroup behavior. At the interpersonal end, the personal self is most salient, and interaction is organized around unique characteristics of interlocutors, idealized in the intimate relationship. *Intergroup* behavior, in contrast, is organized around interpretations of interlocutors as members of a social category, and is idealized as stereotyping. Operating under assumptions that there is a self—a reflexive sense of individuality (Weigert & Gecas, 2003)—SIT holds that when people interact, they categorize their selves in relation to those with whom they interact based on whether the interaction is interpersonal or intergroup. Interaction of the latter type leads to saliency of group-based self-categorization known as *social identity*, “the shared social categorical self” (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994, p. 454). According to SIT, because self-categorization structures interaction, “intergroup relations cannot be reduced to individual psychology but emerge from an interaction between psychology and society” (Turner & Reynolds, 2004, p. 259).
A complex, multivariate theory, SIT (and its partner, self-categorization theory; see Turner, 1987) rests on three primary claims about the social-self and intergroup behavior. First, although not using the term “symbol,” SIT places its conception of identity in the linguistic realm, and, at the extreme end of the social-self, assumes that individuals’ meanings of a group’s symbols are identical among members of the group, and between members and non-members. A group, Tajfel and Turner (1979) argued, exists when an aggregate of people meets three conditions: “perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it” (p. 40). In this perspective, “the essential criteria for group membership . . . are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group” (Tajfel & Turner, p. 40). The only way for those understandings of groups and group membership to serve as foundations for SIT’s claims about intergroup relations is for meanings of social categories to be “shared cognitive representations” (Turner & Reynolds, 2004, p. 261).

The second central claim of SIT holds that social consensus about the value of one’s ingroup (i.e., the group with which a person identifies or is identified as a member of) is constructed around a positive perception of the ingroup, as compared to a given outgroup (i.e., groups with which one does not identify, and/or those groups he or she is not identified as being a member of). There are two important implications here. First, the evaluative stance promotes an ideal of shared meaning of the ingroup and the outgroup, and their perceived members. At the extreme, “when a shared social identity is psychologically operative or salient . . . people’s perceptions of their mutual interests and collective similarities are enhanced” (Turner & Renyolds, 2004, p. 261). Additionally, “as behavior [becomes] more intergroup . . . outgroup
members tended to be seen as homogenous and undifferentiated” (Turner & Reynolds, p. 261). Second, the idea that there is a finite amount of social value places the ingroup and the outgroup into conflict relations on a winner-take-all field. Differentiation, Tajfel and Turner (1979) noted, “even when it conflicts with obvious self-interest . . . [aims] to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimension. Any such act, therefore, is essentially competitive” (p. 42, 41). As a result of these conditions of intergroup relations, “differences in intergroup identification . . . are of central interest to the social identity perspective” (Turner & Reynolds, p. 265). Those differences, Turner and Renyolds (2004) explained, “arise from the natural relatively of perceptions in which meaningful and veridical representations of reality are constructed from each group’s singular perspective and from attempts to (in)validate views of others” (p. 265).

Finally, SIT claims that context must be taken into account when seeking to understand intergroup relations. By context, the foundations of SIT mean social relationships, or the “intergroup situations [wherein] individuals will not interact as individuals . . . but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to members of other groups” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 35). In intergroup contexts, “people strive for positive distinctiveness . . . because, in doing so, the positive connotations of ingroup membership become positive connotations of self” (Hogg & Abrams, 1999, p. 10). Tajfel and Turner (1979) noted that in SIT-based intergroup research, the “main empirical question concerns the conditions that determine the adoption of forms of social behavior nearing one or the other extreme” (i.e., individual and intergroup behavior; p. 34), where “conditions” mean the perceived relative social status of group membership. SIT makes several assumptions about context and conditions, the most important being that parties in situations so defined exist in and recognize that their social
environment is stratified, in which case “the implications of [SIT’s] conceptualization for intergroup relations . . . are both evident and direct” (Tajfel & Turner, p. 36).

To summarize, SIT assumes that members of social groups have a generally shared understanding of themselves as a group, that understanding is counterposed to a common perception among outgroup members about the ingroup’s value, and intergroup contact is structured by struggles to define one’s group (and, thereby, self) as being more valuable than is the outgroup and its members. At all levels of SIT, the working assumption is that ingroup and outgroup members share a definition of themselves and the other group’s members around which are structured intergroup relations. Importantly, SIT research never questions the sharedness of common symbols/meaning of groups. Following what is described as the “minimal group paradigm” (i.e., experimental laboratory groups), such investigations “show that social categorization per se was sufficient to generate intergroup discrimination” (Hogg & Abrams, 1999, p. 10). The “per se” of SIT’s uses of social group self-categorization is critical to the theory because, in effect, SIT researchers study influences on interaction of being part of a minimal group, not a real social group. Categorization and identification are assumed to exist when observations of representations of group membership (i.e., acting in the group’s interest) show that behavior is influenced “obstentionally on the basis of some trivial performance criteria” (Tajef & Turner, 1979, p. 38); interpretations/perceptions of those symbols are not empirical subjects of the perspective. What I call SIT’s consens-us perspective, however, must be accounted for in any discussion of collectivity, because the “basic ideas about the role of social categorization and social in group processes identities [as articulated in SIT] . . . now widely accepted throughout the field [of social psychology]” (p. 259), and those ideals lay at the base of the dissens-us perspectives that are discussed next.
**Dissens-us Collectivity**

Today, SIT primarily is employed in the study of groups and organizations that are very different from the contexts imagined by Tajfel and other early SIT scholars. With few expectations, organizational behavior, organizational psychology, organizational communication, group communication, group psychology, and group sociology explicitly claim SIT as a foundational perspective, or make assumptions about collectives that are rooted in SIT without reference to that theory. Immense and diverse, much of that work is interesting and informative, and it extends understanding and management of collectivity in useful and generative directions.

Unlike SIT, the eclectic universe of collectivity studies today has a common link in explicit attention to the symbolic nature of collectives. Whereas SIT references shared cognitive understandings of groups, contemporary perspectives have turned to the concepts of “shared meaning,” “shared symbols,” and “shared vision” (see, e.g., Bormann, 1996; Broom & Avanzino, 2010; Farmer, Slater, & Wright, 1998). Although currently limited, symbolic perspectives emergent today hold keys to further opening to difference the ideal that ingroup members and outgroup members hold in common meanings of their groups among or between themselves. In a selective discussion, below, I explain how some perspectives on the group as a symbol create space for conceptualizing collectivity as the presence of common symbols and the absence of shared meaning. I group the perspective noted here (and other) under the heading of *dissens-us collectivity*, and consider it to be an analytic-relational orientation to collectivity more than a definition of groups.

Historically, groups studied were constructed within the minimal group paradigm, with “the group” not even needing to involve interacting people. Noninteractional and interactional experimental group research continues, but communication scholars of various stripes (e.g.,
those with group, organizational, discourse, and cultural foci) have challenged the assumptions and the practical value of the minimal group paradigm. Dissens-us collectivity, as Frey (2004) explained a variant, is “not so concerned with coming up with ways to describe ‘types’ of groups . . . as with ways to richly describe groups so that we have some developed understanding of the nature of the collectivities that are actually being studied” (para. 9; see also Frey, 1994a). With respect to theoretical–methodological approaches, Frey and Sunwolf (2004, 2005) brought together theories and research that view a group as a symbol to articulate the symbolic–interpretive (S–I) perspective of group life. “Group,” as used by Frey and Sunwolf, is a meaningful term, just as it is in SIT, and those meanings converge and diverge. In Frey and Sunwolf’s definition, a *group* is (a) “a socially constructed concept”; (b) “characterized by permeable boundaries, shifting borders, and interdependence with its contexts”; and (c) is socially constructed “via interactants’ symbolic activities . . . [that] create a shared reality that binds them together” (p. 283). Furthermore, in the S–I perspective,

Group identity relies on a group successfully distinguishing itself from others by drawing a symbolic boundary around its members, and the subsequent rejection of outsiders is a symbolic process that employs the language of exclusion to recreate the symbolic product of group identity. (pp. 292–293)

There are two main empirical foci of the S–I perspective: First, the approach is interested in “ways in which group members use symbols . . . to communicate and the effects of symbol usage on individual, relational, and collective processes and outcomes”; second, the perspective concerns itself with “how groups and group dynamics themselves are products of such symbolic activity” (Frey & Sunwolf, 2004, p. 278). With such questions in mind, the S–I perspective conceptualizes symbolic interaction at three interdependent levels. *Symbolic predispositions* are
background assumptions and experiences that individuals bring to group interaction that influence interpretations of other members, outgroup members, tasks, rules, and other symbolic aspects of group life. *Symbolic practices* are communicative acts through which symbols, such as humor, dress, and language, are meaningfully used in the group context. *Symbolic processes* and products are the interdependent dynamics (e.g. rules, norms, and roles) and outcomes (e.g., decisions, relations, and collective identity) of a group. In a specific context, those three defining dimensions of a group “emerge and merge continually during group formation and throughout the course of a group’s life” (Frey & Sunwolf, 2004, p. 286).

To account for context, Frey and Sunwolf (2004, 2005) adopted the bona fide group perspective (BFGP). A touchstone critique of the contemporary empirical studies of collectives, the BFGP holds that groups cannot be understood absent an accounting of context, which Putnam and Stohl (1990) described as the environment, or “intergroup system that permeates and interfaces with a particular group” (p. 258). The BFGP takes the management of boundaries (symbolic and physical) as key to understanding groups in their natural environments. As Putnam and Stohl explained, “Boundaries are socially created within and outside the group, connote membership in or out of the group and serve as preconditions of group identity” (p. 257). According to the BFGP, group boundaries must be managed through communication to allow for communication between groups, overlapping group memberships, changes in group membership, and the immediate and relational environment. If boundaries are too rigid, group members “feed on their own anxieties and fail to adapt to their environment,” but if they are too porous, a “group can become dominated by outside groups and their uniqueness withers (Putnam & Stohl, p. 257). Empirical research that verifies the tenets of the BFGP is not large but it
continues to grow (see, e.g., the studies in Frey, 1994b; 2003), and the perspective has some influence in other areas outside of group communication (see, e.g., Burkhalter et al., 2002).

In responding to a collection of empirical studies from the BFGP (Frey, 2003), Stohl and Putnam (2003) noted an empirical route to preventing foreclosure of collective identity within the BFGP. Noting commonalities in the collection, Stohl and Putnam explained that several of the essays had revealed “intergroup processes” (p. 410), such as physical and virtual networks (see Krikorian & Kiyomiya, 2003), and international business (see Sherblom, 2003). Sthol and Putnman described the focus of those studies as a symbolic nexus, “points of connection or overlapping group links” (p. 410). Martin (1992), from whom Stohl and Putnman borrowed the concept, defined the nexus as a site “where a variety of cultural influences come together within a boundary,” and held that some “cultural elements within that boundary will be truly unique” to the collective, whereas “other elements (some of which will be erroneously believe to be unique) will reflect cultural influences external” (p. 111) to the collective. Describing what Martin called the fragmentation perspective, she argued that the nature of cultural nexus (i.e., differences in symbolic interpretations and practices) means that “rather than seeing consensus within the boundaries, the . . . viewpoint presents a multiplicity of interpretations that seldom, if ever, coalesce into a stable consensus” (p. 130). Generally methodologically open, most empirical studies from a nexus perspective, Stohl and Putnam noted, attend to “interactions that reference issues of jurisdiction, interdependence, lineages and connections, and coordination across groups and their social/organizational contexts” (p. 410).

Many ways exist to study communication and relations among group members and their environment, but even the most sophisticated approaches to groups as symbols continue to present the symbols of group life without much depth, uncontested within the group, and only
serving to separate one group from another. Symbols of collective identity are much richer and more complex than almost any approach to groups and group communication has yet to acknowledge. To move beyond ideals about collectivity it is necessary to pursue new interpretations of categories, interests, and identifications of group members, and the ways those symbols and practices are communicatively constituted. The preceding agenda, however, is fraught with difficulties, since the very idea of collectivity or group is typically rooted in limited ideals about symbols of collectivity. Among extant discourses of groups and the communicative constitution of collectivity, the term and concept of “stakeholder” perhaps offers the best meanings for surfacing, addressing, and overcoming the constraints of consens-us.

The Symbolic Stakeholder

“Stakeholder” was coined in the study and practice of corporate governance to highlight the firm’s interdependencies with actors and institutions in its external environment. Historically, as Kletz (2005) explained, “Companies [i.e., corporations] were able to exist without any reference being made to the possibility that entities lying outside of their legal borders could be invited to wield some influence over their management” (p. 58). Throughout the late-20th century, however, as corporations gained renewed, and then extreme, positions in the everyday lives of people who are not legally related to the firm, people external to firms began to make themselves known and demanded business account for social and environmental consequences of doing business. Ever vigilant about threats (warranted or not) to their reputations (and, thereby, profits), corporations responded with programs of corporate social responsibility (CSR), such as those promoted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (2008). As an idealized practice, CSR involves proactive planning and responsive engagement
through the strategic management of relations between a firm and those external to it, also called stakeholders, to distinguish stakeholders from the legal and fiscal relations of shareholders.

In the decades since the CSR movement began, “corporate stakeholders have not only progressively become a main topic in management sciences but also a benchmark in large firms’ discourse about their activities” (Kletz, 2005, p. 58). In other words, like its public counterpart, the stakeholder in business and management literature is a construct upon which reimagined ideas and enactments of governance revolve in discourses of the firm. In contrast to public governance literatures, theorists concerned with the corporate stakeholder have attempted to invest “stakeholder” with conceptual and analytic utility that might facilitate what the area of study describes as “stakeholder identification” and “stakeholder management.” This section reviews the corporate stakeholder literature that attends to those issues in what is called stakeholder theory (SHT). Surveying the corpus of SHT, an imaginary distinction can be drawn between two overlapping orientations: The first orientation involves propositional theories that strive to identify stakeholder types in pursuit of actionable stakeholder management techniques; the second grouping is described (by others) as pragmatic, and takes the stakeholder as a relationship. Before considering their differences, I summarize their common origin.

**Stakeholder Theory**

The starting point for propositional and pragmatic SHT is Freeman’s (1984) book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, where *stakeholder* is defined as “those groups and individuals that can affect, or are affected by, the accomplishment of organizational purpose” (p. 25). Early classification of stakeholders were parties “without the support of . . . [whom] the firm does not survive” (Freeman, 1984, p. 33), such as customers, employees, suppliers, and regulators upon whom the firm depends directly (e.g., for resources) and indirectly
(e.g., for reputation). So defined, the potential for stakeholders to influence and be influenced by
the firm demanded, according Freeman, that managers manage stakeholders. Stated another
way, managers needed to think about and actively engage the firm’s external relations, as well as
its internal operations. Directed at the manager or executive, Freeman’s (1984) “stakeholder
approach is about . . . managerial behavior” (p. 48), and, in that respect, was the foundation for a
theory of strategic management. Freeman (1984) explained the stakeholder concept in term of
strategic management:

One way to understand the definition [of stakeholder] is to think of the stakeholder
concept as an umbrella for the problems in business strategy and corporate social
responsiveness. To be an effective strategist you must deal with those groups that can
affect you, while to be responsive (and effective in the long run) you must deal with those
groups that you can affect. (p. 46)

Freeman (1984) conceptualized the stakeholder as an action-oriented ideal that is “able to
capture a broad range of groups and individuals . . . capable of yielding concrete actions with
specific groups and individuals” (pp. 52–53). More recent ideas of the stakeholder concept have
stuck fairly close to Freeman’s original variables of the stakeholder relation as interests (or
stakes) and power (or resources) that individuals and groups have in relation to the firm’s
objectives. Stakeholder identification has remained not only central in SHT literature but it
virtually has defined the area of study. As discussed in the next section, those attributes (real or
perceived) of individuals and groups are examined through stakeholder identification processes
to determine if an individual or group has stakeholder status, which is the primary focus of
propositional stakeholder theories.
Propositional Stakeholder Theory

Surveying literature across domains of the stakeholder (e.g., strategic management, stakeholder identification, and corporate social responsibility), Donaldson and Preston (1995) identified three types of SHT: (a) descriptive SHT, which attends to the presence and/or absence of stakeholder relations in management of the firm; (b) instrumental SHT, which links claims of stakeholder management ideals with concrete outcomes (e.g., improved customer or supplier relations); and normative SHT, which makes arguments about stakeholder management on the basis of moral and/or philosophical grounds. Whereas Donaldson and Preston’s review of literature that “make[s] implicit or explicit reference to the stakeholder perspective” (p. 71) revealed those three strains, a more focused consideration of works explicitly within SHT suggests an overwhelming concern with normative foundations. Assuming that instrumental research depends on descriptive accounts, T. M. Jones and Wicks (1999) reached a similar conclusion, noting that “instrumental implications of various normative cores [of SHT] have not been systematically developed” (p. 210). Below, I briefly review positions in normatively directed literatures addressing questions about who stakeholders are and how to manage stakeholder relations.

That SHT literatures predominately are normative is surprising because the only such foundation for the identification of a stakeholder is an undefined notion of an individual’s or group’s “legitimate” claim to such status. In Freeman’s (1984) account, “‘Stakeholder’ connotes ‘legitimacy,’” and that legitimacy was based on a managerial standpoint, such that “‘legitimacy’ can be understood . . . [as] implying that it is ‘legitimate to spend time and resources’ on stakeholders, regardless of the appropriateness of their demands” (p. 45). Over time, the managerial perspective has softened or dissolved, with the normative foundation for stakeholder
management/engagement transformed into the intrinsic value of individuals and groups in relation to the firm (see Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

On the surface, redescription of legitimacy away from management control was a positive movement, but the weakening of legitimate stakeholder status, as defined by management, renders everyone a potential stakeholder, and if everyone is stakeholder, there can be no management per se, as stakeholder management must manage relations between the firm and specific individuals and groups. Identifying from the universe of potential stakeholders those individuals and groups with a “legitimate” claim to stakeholder status with which, for moral or practical reasons, the firm must engage, thus, has dominated propositional stakeholder literatures. Such perspectives can be called theories of stakeholder identification and salience.

Stakeholder identification and salience theories and typologies are a primary activity of propositional stakeholder research. Those theories and typologies can be grounded into two categories, which, to avoid confusing terms, I call “inductive” and “deductive”: Inductive identification and salience research describes attributes and relations of stakeholders but endows them with explanatory power; deductive identification and salience research names attributes and relations of stakeholders, and theorizes about the effects that result from various stakeholder arrangements and interactions. Table 2.1 summarizes many existing typologies of both approaches.

Although neither approach is grounded in empirical study, and, moreover, deductive approaches often are metamodels of existing theoretical speculation, among extant typologies, each approach has much to offer stakeholder scholarship. These approaches, however, continue to associate “primarily [with the] use of the stakeholder concept . . . as a tool for gathering information about generic stakeholders” (Freeman, 1984, p. 54). Frooman (1999) described the
limitations of identification and salience approaches to SHT as their “emphasis . . . on the individuals in the relationships—not on the relationships themselves” (p. 192). Furthermore, Frooman claimed that “missing from the theory has been an account of how stakeholders manage a firm” (p. 192); in other words, the “relationship” in the stakeholder relationship has not been well developed. SHT, from a pragmatic perspective, however, has laid groundwork for better relational stakeholder perspectives.

**Pragmatic Stakeholder Theory**

“Pragmatic” is the label given by Freeman (1994) to a perspective that views the corporate stakeholder as a “metaphor . . . embed[ed] . . . in a story about how human begins create and exchange value” (p. 418). From a pragmatic perspective, the aim of SHT and stakeholder research is not to uncover truths about the stakeholder but to explore and experiment with organizational forms and practices predicated on ideals of stakeholder relations. As Freeman (1994) declared, “It is time to get on with it, and get on with it in a pragmatic vein” (p. 419). Unfortunately, even if the principle that stakeholder scholarship should tell stories (the implied “it” in the sentence above) is accepted, the pragmatic stakeholder literature is not clear about how to get on with it in practice. Part of the reason for confusion about the pragmatic stakeholder is that discussions move in multiple and often contradictory directions. In this section, I present what I take to be pillar traits of pragmatic stakeholder perspectives distilled from that limitedly organized literature; specifically, I discuss the pragmatic stakeholder’s (a) focus on language, communication, and symbols, (b) the perspective’s metatheoretical stance, and (c) its situated understanding of concrete stakeholders.
Table 2.1

*Typologies of Stakeholders and Stakeholder Relations*

Savage et al. (1991)

Stakeholder can be: *primary*, such as formal, official, or contractual relationships, and have a direct and necessary economic impact on the organization, versus *secondary*, able to exert influence on or are affected by the organization; and *internal*, such as staff employees and middle managers; *external*, such as local community, federal government, suppliers, competitors, and customers; or *interface*, such as a board of directors and its auditors.

Stakeholder relations are defined by degree of potential to threaten and potential to cooperate with the organization: *supportive stakeholders* are low on potential threat but high on potential for cooperation, *mixed-blessing stakeholders* have potential to threaten or to cooperate at equally high levels; *nonsupportive stakeholders* are high on potential threat but low on potential cooperation, and *marginal stakeholders* have both low threat and cooperation. Organizations engage with stakeholders differently, such that supportive stakeholders are *involved*, mixed-blessing stakeholders are *collaborated with*, nonsupportive stakeholders are *defended against*, and marginal stakeholders are *monitored*.

Starik (1995)

Nature is recognized as an important business environment, and, when the concept of stakeholder includes ethical, socioemotional, legal, and physical characteristics, the nonhuman natural environment is a stakeholder.

Clarkson (1995)

Stakeholder issues can be *corporate* or *business issues*; *social issues* are not perceived as being corporate or business issues. Social issues are not necessarily stakeholder issues, and stakeholder issues are not necessarily social issues.

Levels of stakeholder analysis: *institutional*, or business and society; *organizational*, or the corporation and its stakeholder groups; and *individual*, or managers who manage stakeholder issues and relationships.
Stakeholder relations are affected by network density, a ratio of the number of relationships that exist compared with the total number of possible ties between individuals; and actors’ centrality, their position in the network relative to others, as delineated by the number of ties that they have with other actors in the network. Centrality can be assessed for closeness, actors’ ability to access independently all other members of the network, or for betweenness, as an intermediary between actors, ability to control others.

Network boundaries can be examined by attending to actors’ attributes, types of relations, and/or central issues or events.

Managers should question stakeholders as to who they are, or their attributes; what they want, or their ends; and how they are going to get it, or their means.

Stakeholders have resources that can be withheld, when a stakeholder chooses not to allocate a resource to the organization, or withholds it; or stakeholders can use their resources, continuing to supply a resource, but with strings attached.

Stakeholder can influence the organization directly, when the stakeholder manipulates the flow of resources to the firm, or indirectly, by having an ally manipulate (either by withholding or using) the flow of resources to the firm.

Three types of stakeholders: normative, those to whom the organization has a moral obligation, with an obligation of stakeholder fairness that is over and above that due other social actors simply by virtue of them being human; derivative, those groups whose actions and claims must be accounted for by managers due to their potential effects on the organization and its normative stakeholders; and those with no stakeholder status, to whom the focal organization has no moral obligation in addition to what they are owed qua human and the likelihood of them having an impact up the organization or its other normative stakeholders.

Stakeholders and symbols. Language and communication are to the pragmatic stakeholder, although often in understated ways. Freeman (1984), for example, justified introduction of the stakeholder concept by explaining that “words make a difference in how we see the world. By using ‘stakeholder’ managers and theorists alike will come to see these groups as having a ‘stake’” (p. 45). (Determining the legitimacy of those stakes is addressed in the next paragraph.) From the pragmatic perspective, names/categories structure relations between the namer and the named (and others; see R. Phillips, 2003; Rowley 1997; Wicks, Gilbert, &
Freeman, 1994), and the stakeholder concept names people in relation to/through the corporation. Contrasted with shareholder, and its binary, rational-economic interpretations, stakeholder names a multiplicity of morally saturated relationships. As R. A. Phillips, Freeman, and Wicks (2003) contended, “Stakeholder theory is unique because it addresses morals and values explicitly as a central feature of managing organizations” (p. 481). Relations between the corporation and those in its environment are redescribed/transformed from either–or (i.e., a shareholder or not, with the latter not being in relation to the company) absent ethical content to “explicitly and unabashedly moral” (T. M. Jones & Wicks, 1999, p. 215) relationships with ambiguous boundaries (Schilling, 2000). From the pragmatic perspective, once the stakeholder is embedded in discourses of the firm, those in relation to it “are seen as individuals, human beings, [and] they must be seen as moral beings, without moral immunity, initially on the same rather level playing field. The question now becomes what principles should govern their interaction” (Freeman, 1994, p. 413).

Managing organizations means managing stakeholders, and “managing for stakeholders will include communication between managers and stakeholders” (R. A. Phillips et al., 2003, p. 486). To date, however, description of stakeholder interaction has been limitedly conceptualized in pragmatic stakeholder literatures. Freeman (1984) described both the “day to day interaction” (p. 71) and special instances of communication with stakeholders as the transactional level of those relationships, and approached the subject from an instrumental perspective (Freeman, 2004). Wicks et al. (1994) described communication in a feminist and pragmatic model of the stakeholder, explaining that “communication provides the mechanism for persons to interact with and learn from one another . . . and to sculpt a form of interaction that fists them” (p. 487).
More recently, the status of communication in pragmatic stakeholder discourses appears to be moving toward perspectives that are more in line with assumptions of the stakeholder concept (e.g., that stakeholders do not exist but are named). Dunham, Freeman, and Liedtka (2006), for instance, examined the stakeholder status of “community” and concluded that “community is a particularly amorphous and centerless stakeholder group” (p. 39). Moreover, Antonacopoulou and Meric (2005) called for abandoning transactional stakeholder communication perspectives, claiming that “interaction is not only material or tangible, but also symbolic” (p. 139; see also Yamak, 2005).

**Stakeholder metatheory.** According to Freeman (1994), it follows from the stakeholder as a symbol of organizational relations that “there is no stakeholder theory” (p. 409), “there are just narratives about stakeholders and narratives about these narratives—that is, theory” (Freeman, 1999, p. 234). The pragmatic stakeholder is not only an orientation toward the stakeholder concept and stakeholder relations but a metatheoretical ideal about knowledge of stakeholders and their relations. From the pragmatic perspective, the stakeholder concept/relations is predicated on empirical realities, not on an essential normative core; the “simple fact” is that corporate survival depends in part on there being some “fit” between the values of the corporation and its managers, the expectation of stakeholders in the firm, and the societal issues which will determine the ability of the firm to sell products. (Freeman, 2004, p. 234)

As a result, normative, description, instrumentality, and narrative accounts of the stakeholder are “tied together in particular political configurations,” with their various arrangements collectively forming “a genre of stories about how we could live” (Freeman, 1994, p. 413). According to the
pragmatic metatheory, stakeholder theories—like the relations, influences, actions, and tales that they abstract—exist in a state of reasonable pluralism.

For Freeman (1994), “reasonable pluralism” meant that SHT must not strive “to prescribe one and only one ‘normative core;’” scholars and managers will have different “conceptions of how society ought to be structured, and so there are different possible normative cores” (pp. 415, 414). To draw together various stakeholder theories and their (not always congruent) normative assumptions, Freeman proposed taking a stance vis-à-vis (at least) one of two interdependent concerns of corporate governance: how corporations ought to be governed, and how managers ought to act. (Alternatively, one could argue why those issues are irrelevant.) The particular normative ideals (e.g., discourse ethics, ecology, feminism, and/or procedural justice) at the core of a stakeholder theory provide mechanisms for a “full-fledged account of how we could understand value creating activity differently” (Freeman, 1994, p. 415). This pluralistic perspective erases any hope of a final stakeholder ideal and, thereby, a science of the stakeholder. The “value [i.e., validity and reliability] of our metaphors and narratives [i.e., research] . . . is how they enable us to live, and the proof is in the living” (Freeman, 1994, p. 418).

**Contextual complexity.** Stakeholder relations with/in the contemporary firm are complicated, but “the stakeholder model, as it has been used, is not terribly sophisticated” (Harrison & Freeman, 1999, p. 484). By *stakeholder model* is meant processes of stakeholder identification, sometimes referred to as “stakeholder mapping.” A key tool of stakeholder management, the exact purposes of stakeholder mapping vary by situation, but at its most basic, the activity results in lists of individuals and groups in relation to the organization, generally or with respect to a specific strategic issue (see Freeman, 1984). The first stakeholder maps “were
just generic groups, unindividuated without clear membership conditions” (Freeman, 1994, p. 411). As SHTs grew in number and detail, understanding of stakeholder relations changed, and maps became more complex. Freeman (1984), for example, explained that stakeholders “change over time, and their stakes change depending on the strategic issue under consideration” (p. 37). Variation in who is engaged with as a stakeholder, and why they are engaged, means that stakeholder relations cannot be defined generally, and that SHTs cannot “dictate specific [management] actions in the abstract” (R. A. Phillips et al., 2003, p. 485). The concreteness of stakeholder relations, thus, introduces context into the frame of stakeholder theory.

References and allusions to context pepper SHT literatures, but there has been little sustained attention to the subject. Yamak (2005) forwarded a perspective, noting that “institutional setting may be expected to influence both the definition of stakeholders and their relative positions” (p. 81). Moving beyond the boundaries of the firm, Antonacopoulou and Meric (2005) placed stakeholder relations in the context of ongoing “interdependency between stakeholders as part of a wider social whole” (p. 126). Hansen, Bode, and Moosmayer (2004), writing about context as the cultural sphere where a SHT is developed, pointed out that understanding experiences of existing stakeholder relationships in different contexts can further enrich a stakeholder approach acknowledging different stakeholder groups, different power relations between companies and stakeholders, and different regulative frames. This research can contribute to the still underdeveloped dynamic stakeholder behavior model and to the depiction of changing stakeholder–company relations over time. (p. 251)

Moreover, in addition to multiple, concrete, and shifting stakeholders in relation, stakeholders are not one-dimensional. Freeman (1984) discussed what he called “‘stakeholder
role set,’ or the set of roles which an individual or group may play qua being a stakeholder” (p. 58). Importantly, “many members of certain stakeholder groups are also members of other stakeholder groups and qua stakeholder in an organization may have to balance (or not balance) conflicting and competing roles” (Freeman, 1984, p. 58). Freeman never defined the term “roles,” and the language later was dropped in favor of “interests.” Today, however, some scholars are questioning the utility of interests as a core dimension of what it means to have a stake. Interests, they have suggested, are treated as objective constructs, but stakeholding is an active relationship. Antonacopoulou and Meric (2005), for example, held that stakeholder analysis “unveils not only subjectives but identities that are at stake” (p. 126).

Finally, Rowely and Moldoveanu (2003) offered a theory of stakeholder mobilization that draws on both interest-based motivation and identity-based motivation. Rowely and Moldoveanu’s theory presents, perhaps, the most intricate conceptualization of stakeholder relations to date, the outlines of which are worth noting:

These two motives [i.e., interests and identity] . . . are conditioned by the degree of overlap across stakeholder groups. Because individuals have multiple interests and identities, they can be affiliated with multiple stakeholder groups. We suggest that one type of relationship connecting two stakeholders is their degree of overlap in terms of their memberships, interests, and identities, and we argue that these relationships among distinct stakeholder groups influence wither a given stakeholder group will mobilize. (p. 205)

Although there is a wealth of ideas and ideals about stakeholders, those perspectives have not yet led to questioning of some basic (and arguably inaccurate) assumptions of SHT. In the following section, an interdisciplinary constellation of concepts is forwarded that can assist in
better understanding and critiquing the stakeholder concept. Specifically, under the assumption that “stakeholder” is a category constituted in communication, and that uses and meanings of that category (and many others) are different and contested, the communication practices of categorization, dis/identification, and representation are forwarded as starting points for reimagining the stakeholder concept, and thereby rethinking collectivity.

**Communicatively Constituting Collectivity**

Ideals of dissens-us collectivity are discussed broadly in philosophical and theoretical literatures, but those interested in such perspectives have struggled to find ways to explore their ideals in practice. Below, “doing” collective identities and interests is parsed into three forms: (a) *categorization*, the naming of individuals as members of collectives and description of collectives and their members; (b) *identification*, the degree to which individuals communicatively accept or reject ascribed and performed meanings of collectives; and (c) *representation*, the presentation of collective interests and identities constructing and reconstructing meanings of social categories/collectives. Together, categorization, identification, and representation allow for an understanding of doing dissens-us collectivity that can attend to local categories and can demonstrate their relations to each other, to interaction, and to outcomes.

**Categorization: Symbolizing of Collectivity**

Whatever else they might be, collectives, are symbolic constructions, the meanings of which are created and recreated in communication about the collective, its members, and relations within, outside, and at the boundaries of the group. Collectives and their members display and are known by many symbols (e.g., activity, dress, logos, and proper name); the one of interest in this study being categories. The word “category” is employed widely in collectivity
studies, but, mostly, in noun form as a static, descriptive, and essentialized label of sociological (i.e., not local or interactional) importance. If category is viewed as a verb—categorization—as a communicative practice, and communication is observed, it quickly becomes apparent that not all social actors interpret categories-in-use similarly. This section forwards an interactional perspective of categorization that assists in centering attention not on the labels, themselves, but on what categories mean to participants in interaction and how those meanings structure meanings of those people in interaction, as well as meanings of the interaction, itself, performances of which create and recreate discourses and social structures.

In a series of papers, Sacks (1967 1972) provided, to date, the most through account of categorization as a communicative practice (see Silverman, 1998). For Sacks, categories were not simple names but collections of categories combined with culturally informed rules for use, which, together, he called membership categorization devices (MCD). Sacks held that categorization along a single dimension is impossible because categories are grouped together into inference-rich collections (i.e., devices), such that when one category is invoked explicitly, others are stated implicitly, with the particular couplings of meaning always being immediate and localized. In practical terms, a MCD does not simply (re)present the subject categorized descriptively but in interactional and relational terms as well. Moreover, the MCD employed in interaction is neither a given (i.e., there are many ways to categorize a subject), nor does it have decontextualized meaning. It follows from the localization of MCD use that such collections of categories are historically and culturally informed, and that when invoked in talk, social meanings of categories shape interaction and interpretation of self, others, and situations.

In addition to the discursive, interactional, and culturally situated meanings of categories and their influence on interaction, Sacks observed that not all MCDs are presented through
explicit use of categorical words (e.g., carpenter, father, or woman); sometimes, MCDs are invoked through description of what members of the category do (as determined by interlocutors). Sacks (1972) described such categorization as *category-bound activities*, which he defined as “activities taken by members to be done by some particular or several particular categories of members where the categories are categories from membership categorization devices” (p. 33). Category-bound activities categorize through description of what is done—or, more specifically, what in talk is said is done—by members of social categories that stand in place of a category/MCD itself. Empirically, as Sacks (1972) explained, “One way to decide that an activity is category bound is to see whether, the fact of membership being unknown, it can be ‘hinted at’ by naming the activity as something one does” (p. 336). Importantly, although category-bound activities are an indirect way of categorizing, they still are MCDs that are interpreted through culturally informed assumptions that allow for recognition of the doing as categorical, and that connect to value-laden assumptions about the doing and relations between doers and others.

Dormant for some years, increasingly, MCD perspectives and orientations have been taken up by theorists and researchers of language and social interaction under the name “membership categorization analysis” (MCA). An emerging reformulation not without its critics (see, e.g., Schegloff, 2007), MCA scholarship, although diverse, has the common concern of symbolic dimensions of local categorization-in-interaction (see Lepper, 2000; McCabe & Stokoe, 2004; Silverman, 2012; Stokoe, 2009). Stokoe (2012) described MCA as attempting “to unpack what is apparently unsaid by members and produce an analysis of their subtle categorization work” (p. 282). What the “analysis” of MCA looks like varies; the common ideal
is reconstruction of members’ categories through textual analysis of interactional speech.

Schefloff (2007) stated those principles in the strongest terms:

We need some evidence that the participants’ production of the world was itself informed by these particular categorization devices. And so if we want to characterize the parties to some interaction with some category terms, we need in principal to show that parties were orientated to that categorization device in producing and understanding—moment-by-moment—the conduct that composed its progressive realization. (p. 475)

**Dis/identification: Processes of Collectivity**

Cheney and colleagues (Cheney, 1983a, 1983b; 1991; Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998) have offered an account of collectivity grounded in rhetoric and symbolic interaction that inserts itself in-between meanings of collective symbols. Described as an unceasing process of creating and recreating meanings of self and others, Cheney and Tompkins (1987) defined identification as “the appropriation of identity,” where identity is “what is commonly taken as representative of a person or group” (p. 5). From that perspective, identity is not a thing but a symbol that is “representative of” the individual or collective; identification is not a one-to-one relationship with a symbol (e.g., the collective), but an interpretive relationship structured by social meanings of social symbols/categories. Cheney and Tompkins explained that their approach was “an integrative conceptualization” (p. 5) of identity and identification, with (at least) three principal qualities: (a) sensitivity to the sameness–difference paradox of collectivity, (b) centering of common interests, and (c) attention to the individual–collective dialectic.

Below, I briefly review this perspective, those core traits, and some relevant literature.

To begin, identification in this approach is rhetorical in foundation, but interdisciplinary in origin. Cheney and colleagues drew from many ideals about symbolic interaction and identity
as a communicative construction, integrating them into an interpretative frame that was guided by Burkean rhetoric. For Burke (1969), identification is the necessary counterpoint to identity that is conceived in terms of distinction, or the negative “not I.” As Cheney (1983a) explained, “With so much emphasis on distinctions and differences . . . identification arises as a communicative, cooperative response” (p. 145). Human differences and human development demand distinction, but those divisions depend on deindividuation, or, as Cheney and Tompkins (1987) put it, “we . . . find ourselves in the paradoxical position of declaring our essence, our uniqueness, in large part by expressing affiliation or identification with various organized groups” (p. 4). The paradox of identity is its “profound ambiguity, . . . [wherein] similarity and difference mutually implicate one another, exist in ongoing dialectical tension, and provide the formative context for what we call our ‘identity’” (Cheney, 1991, p. 13).

Cheney and colleagues adopted a definition of identity that is tied to shared or common interests. As with other symbolic approaches to collectivity, collectivity as identification treats the content of identities as interests; as Cheney and Tompkins (1987) explained, “Identity is shared to the extent that interests are shared” (p. 5). The sharing of interests occurs, according to Cheney (1991), through the “transcendent power of language” (p. 17). To “speak of a collective identity is to speak of collective or shared interests—or at least of how the interests of a collective are represented and understood” (Cheney, 1991, p. 14). Shared interests, however, are not, in themselves, interesting; the identification perspective is interested in the production and influence of interests on organizational outcomes. With respect to the latter, identification has been tied to loyalty, commitment, control and other aspects collective life, because shared interests foster interdependence, and the “interest of each [individual] requires the collaboration of all” (Cheney, 1991, p. 14). On the side of constructing shared interests, Cheney (1983a)
mentioned the processes of (a) building common ground, (b) identification through antithesis, and (c) the assumed or transcendent “we,” each of which manages the individual–collective interest tension through communication.

The individual–collective tension is better thought of as paradox that is similar to the sameness–difference paradox. Just as individual identity depends on social relations, so does the relationship between individual and collective interests flex in disjointed ways. Symbolic relations of identification, according to Cheney and Tompkins (1987), “derives something for the individual from his/her social resources and . . . directs (or ‘takes’) the individual in terms of making contributions” (pp. 1–2); there is, wrote Cheney (1991), “a wavering line between identification and division, one that never ceases to complicate social relations” (p. 16). For Cheney and colleagues, managing the boundary between individual and collective was a rhetorical achievement that was situationally dependent, but working, principally, to foster a sense of we. As Cheney (1991) explained, “‘We’ works and cooperation occurs because individuals symbolically express their shared interests” (p. 18). It is under such conditions that Tompkins and Cheney’s (1985) descriptive definition of identification applies: “A decision maker identifies with an organization when he or she desires to choose the alternative which best promotes the perceived interest of that organization” (p. 194). Cheney (1991) held that relations of identification constitute the collective, with it being “held together in precisely this manner, by communicating and ‘inculcating’ premises for decisions inside the organization and to other publics outside the organization” (p. 8; see also Smith & Berg, 1987). Although couched in discourses of organizations, and, therefore, management, this perspective of identification was described by Cheney and colleagues as applicable to temporally, spatially, and symbolically transcendent groups, as well as to exclusive collectives with tightly guarded boundaries.
Before leaving identification processes, it is worth nothing an acknowledged dark side, an “other side,” and in empirical side. Identification, as a necessary process of social organization and self-definition, is open to unintentional and intentional abuses. Cheney and Tompkins (1987) noted that there can be two dangers of identification. First, overidentification occurs when the group dominates the self, which can lead to groupthink (see, e.g., Janis, 1983) and unobtrusive control (see Bullis, 1984; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Second, the individual can be alienated from collectives through underidentification, with one outcome being an individual’s perceived irrelevance to the group by other members. The “other side” of identification is its openness to difference, which is obscured by the domination of “shared interests” in this line of theory and research. There always has been a crack in its foundation, with Cheney (1991), for example, suggesting the use of “strategic points of ambiguity to reconcile differences, to unite members under one symbolic banner, to ‘stretch’ an interpretation of the organization’s mission to establish common group with outsiders, but also sometimes to deceive” (p. 179). That crack, however, has not been widened much.

The notion that the “common language” of collectivity can be employed in different ways led Holmer-Nadsen (1996) to suggest that shared identification with common symbols was an oppressive and limiting definition of collectivity. She proposed, instead, a tripartite model of collective identification grounded in discourse theories. The first type was identification, defined as reflecting a dominant discourse, or employing conventional terms in conventional ways, and relating to the collective as if its interests were one’s self-interests. The second was counter-identification, in which terms and meanings of the existing discourse are appropriated and rearticulated in way that subvert dominant meanings. The last form is dis-identification,
communication that rejects explicitly the dominant discourse and forwards an alternative interpretation.

Finally, there has been little written on methods for how to study collective identification, but common approaches include ethnography, interviews, and document analysis. Cheney (1982) quantitatively operationalized the construct of identification in the organizational identification questionnaire (although see critiques of the instrument by Barge & Schlueter, 1988; Miller, Allen, Casey, & Johnson; 2000; Sass & Canary, 1991), but qualitative methods have been the norm. The identification literature, however, has been quiet regarding which qualitative methods to employ and how to employ them, although Cheney (1991) described some necessary empirical and interpretative principals:

The researcher must consider carefully an array of factors, including the hierarchical relationships entailed; both stated and obscured purposes; the process of message construction; and the interests and involvements of audiences or publics. In sum, one must know the complete history of a corporate “voice” to understand its message deeply.

(p. 164)

**Representation: Performing Collectivity**

The term “representation” appears in most categorization, identification, and collectivity literatures, but infrequently with conceptual definition; indeed, until recently, there was little reflection on representation as a communicative practice. A slippery concept, representation, at once, is a core theoretical process of constructivist perspectives (i.e., the process through which symbols are made meaningful), and a concrete action done through verbal and visual messages. No dividing line exists between those meanings of representation but, here, the focus is on social dimensions, where representation minimally means to speak for others, notions of which have
been developed most systematically in the fields of political science and political theory. Traditionally called “political representation,” this area of study has foregrounded an interest in practices and principles of principal–agent relations of collective governance that transcend political contexts, but the literature remains relatively unnoted outside of political science.

Historically and today, practices and principles of the representative relationship have been taken primarily as (constitutionally legitimated) geographically defined and role based (see Andreweg, 2003; Pitkin, 1969; Rehfeld, 2006; Urbinati, 2006; Vieira & Runciman, 2008), with representative selection and accountability being the major topics in theory (see Mansbridge, 2003), and constituent satisfaction and approval of central empirical focus. New understandings and performances of political representation, however, presently are undoing the foundations of political representation in existing structures of government, a situation that is causing productive agitation in-between representation as role and as communicative claim. Below, I briefly describe the present context of the study of representation in-between roles and claim, and then discuss Saward’s (2010) constitutive perspective of representation, a position that is attuned to collectivity as symbolic and communicative.

Urbinati and Warren (2008) explained the general causes of contemporary questioning of representation as “the dislocation, plurlaization, and redefinition of constituencies” (p. 389), following the breakdown of exclusively territorial politics and governance. According to Urbinati and Warren, “Territoriality . . . identifies only one set of ways in which individuals are involved in, or affected by, collective structures and decisions” (pp. 389–390). Such relations are discussed primarily at supranational levels, but what Urbinati and Warren described as “issue-based and policy-driven networks of government actors and stakeholders” (p. 390) can be found everywhere, and, of course, they have local–global intersections. The flipside of all those
multilateral, intersecting issue-based constituencies is an increase in those speaking about their interests and the interests of others, with each person being a potential representative of a group under various types of sanction and accountability, including representation as self-authorization in the absence of accountability. As Urbinati and Warren argued, “The spaces for representative claims and discourses are relatively wide open [Urbinati, 2006]. In complex and broadly democratic societies, representation is a target of competing claims” (p. 391).

Generally speaking, the idea of claiming representation holds that representation is a communicative accomplishment that is (ideally) open to any individual (or group), and through which the individual gains recognition as a representative of the group (sometimes in the presence of underlying roles and processes that influence successful claims), and, thereby, acquires the legitimacy to be heard as speaking for the group. Saward (2010) has best and most fully developed a perspective on representation as a constitutive claim of the representative and the represented. A rich, pragmatic, and tractable perspective on the representative claim, its performances, variations, and conditions for success, Saward held that “representation is not something external to its performance, but is something largely generated by the making, the performing, of claims to be representative” (p. 66). Technically, Saward defined a representative claim as communication “claim[ing] to represent or to know what represents the interest of someone or something... It invokes—consists of—claims that stand for others by virtue of presenting myself as—performing the role of—delegate, trustee, or agent” (p. 43).

In Saward’s view, the representative claim is not only a claim to represent but a “portrayal or representation of constituencies as objects, and indeed about the links between the two” (p. 47). Representation constitutes the social identities of members of the constituency, and, as such, “the ‘interests’ of a constituency have to be ‘read in’ more than ‘read off’; it is an
active, creative process” (Saward, p. 74). All of this leads to collective identity, and the question of whether “groups, individuals, or constituencies have a single, undisputed, and *authentic* identity that can merely be received by a political representative” (Saward, p. 78). The answer, of course, is that they do not; representations constituting meanings of social collectives always are variously partial and multiple, selective and expansive, and concrete (i.e., roles) and contingent (i.e., claims).

Saward’s (2010) self-described practical approach moved away from “representation-as-fact to representation-as-process . . . what or who *produces* the apparent fact of representation” (p. 26) In contrast with the binary ideals of principal–agent relationships, Saward forwarded a multidimensional perspective of overlapping and completing forms, situations, and conditions of representative claims. Two parts of Saward’s perspective—the constituent-audience distinction and the formal–informal representative—are critical, in general, and to my particular application.

The *constituent-audience distinction* holds that representative claims have an interactional component, even if that interaction is highly mediated. Audiences and constitutes may overlap fully, partially, or not at all; and a representative claim can be made about an audience/constituency to itself, about an agent absent from the audience, or be a blend. The *formal–informal distinction* is a generalization of the official–unofficial person or group who makes a claim to representation; would-be representatives need not be elected but also could be appointed (e.g., cabinet ministers) or seated in other ways. The primary reason for distinguishing formal from informal representation is because of structural influences from existing systems, cultures, and discourses. Awash in symbols, perhaps the best that can be done, as Saward noted, is to acknowledge “that there is a field of the representable at a given time, in a given context; and that this field expands and contracts under varied pressures” (p. 81). That orientation makes
it necessary to consider “representative claims as constitutive of claimants, recipients, and context” (Saward p. 18). Ultimately, that philosophical position has methodological implications; Saward suggested “delaying normative questions in favor of more fine-grained understanding of representation’s dynamics” (p. 29).

**Conclusion**

This chapter brought together a constellation of perspectives on public stakeholder governance, and the stakeholder concept and stakeholder relations as developed in the corporate sector. Even in the abstract, the conceptual value of the corporate stakeholder to public participation studies cannot be overstated; although an imperfect fit, the corporate stakeholder brings the concrete subject of governance into focus, and provides a jump-start on development of stakeholder theories of public stakeholders. As a subject position, “stakeholder(s)” exists in relation to systems, or regimes, of governance; they are the actors who participate, collaborate, or dialogue. In the theory and practice of public participation and corporate management, “stakeholder(s)” has become a useful way of representing subjects of governance, but those subjects remain abstractions.

This chapter suggested that turning on the common theme of “interests,” the “stakeholder(s)” can be understood as a symbol of collective identity, under which there are multiple stakeholder interests, each almost always representing a collective (i.e., not an individual, such as property owner). I then argued that symbols of collective interests and identities—particularly, complex relations, such as “stakeholder(s)”—can be studied profitably by attending closely to communicative practices through which people categorize and dis/identify, and that represent symbols of collectivity, or social categories. The next chapter introduces the research design and context through which that objective is pursued.
Chapter 2 Notes

1Despite increasing reference to symbols in the study of collectives, scholars of collectivity in sociology and social psychology do not usually equate collectivity with categories (see Jenkins, 2004). The distinction is maintained on the basis that “groups” are physical collections of people and that categories are representations of a group.

2Identification mostly is studied in organizational contexts from social-psychological or traditional constructivist perspective (see He & Brown, 2013). The organizational identification literature is a large and interesting body of work (see, e.g., Chaput, Brummans, & Cooren, 2011; Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach, 1999; Fay & Kline, 2012; Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Frandsen, 2012; Glynn, 2000; Gossett, 2002; Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005; Kassing, 2000; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Larson & Pepper, 2011; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Maneerat, Hale, & Arvind, 2005; Pacanowski, 1983; Pratt, 2000, 2003; Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001; Ruud, 1996; Schrodt, 2003; Scott & Stephens, 2009; Stephens & Dailey, 2012; Whetten, 2006; E. A. Williams & Cannaughton, 2012). Those and related literatures, however, have only minimal relevance to this study due to essentialist ideals about categories and the conduct of most organizational research in the bounded contexts of business organizations.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

As noted in Chapter 1, practical theory and postcritical ethnography embrace a multimethodological stance in which methods are fitted to the contexts and questions being studied. Extant practical theory and postcritical research, however, have tended to treat multimethodological approaches as occurring across various studies; efforts to bring together multiple methods in a single study are rare. The present report moves forcefully into the latter approach, seeking, as a consequence of studying conditions in situ, to align and/or mix together within the same text different methods of data collection and analysis. Although the methods employed in this study are eclectic, as adopted in this study, they all fall under a general perspective that often is described as “interpretivism” (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In that respect, the data-collection and analytic procedures employed share the assumption that social worlds are communicatively constituted and open to various interpretations. Where each of the methods discussed below falters is in its ability to capture and make sense of the many different ways that the social world examined was constituted in communication.

Like the individuals’ quotes in the opening paragraphs of this report (see Chapter 1), when this research study began, I had a fairly naïve perspective about how the CCG would unfold. Research that I had conducted previously taught me not to expect the positive outcomes that were being expressed by participating community members, but with respect to assessing transformation through attention to stakeholder categories, I felt confident that the data-collection procedures and the data that they produced could be defined and held constant during
the CCG. However, by the time that CCG members were selected and had their first meeting—a few months after the research began—whatever foci and ground rules that I had established for this study had become victims of the CCG’s changing and contentious practical enactment. Always adapting to its environment, the CCG occurred in/created a volatile social context, and the many forms of overlapping communication constituting the CCG fostered conditions that required diverse data-collection procedures. The various forms of those data then necessitated, during interpretive and reconstruction phases of the study, different analytic methods. From a traditional/foundational perspective, the resulting constellation of data-collection and analytic methods employed in this study may appear unfocused, but with respect to achieving the goals of the study in light of what the situation presented, no better options existed.

In general, the methodological approach adopted for this study can be called an “emergent design.” In four major sections, this chapter describes how the design emerged, the influence of personal commitments on that design, how data were gathered in light of the emerging design, and specific attributes of the CCG that are addressed in the body of the report. The chapter begins by discussing the study’s emergent research design and its intersection with my assumptions and empirical realities of the research site, conditions that led to a focus in this report on language, communication, and discourses of/about stakeholders. The second section discusses the study’s particular analytic perspectives and types of data, and interpretive stances for which those approaches call, particularly the blending of ethnographic attention to social discourses/practices with the discourse-analytic focus on communication during interaction. Taking cues from ideals presented in preceding sections, the third section discusses procedures followed in data collection, organization, and reduction, employing what I call a “corpus-database approach.” The fourth section introduces local issues, membership categories, and
governing structures of the CCG that shaped discourses, practices, and events attended to in this
study. A final section orients readers to the narrative reconstruction of the CCG (and its
environment) that unfolds across the following chapters.

An Emergent Research Design

Although there are vast and diverse theoretical literatures, process designs, and
commentaries regarding stakeholder governance, there are few guides to the study of stakeholder
governance as it unfolds in situ. Variations in types of stakeholder governance make diversity
essential, but within and between certain forms (e.g., deliberation, dialogue, and collaboration),
general processes can be located. A special challenge is posed by collaborative stakeholder
governance, models of which promote an adaptive process design (see Fernandez-Gimenez &
Ballard, 2011; Walker & Senecah, 2011). In collaborative governance, adaptation suggests that
general designs are molded to fit the immediate situation, and a collaborative process, itself, is
responsive to changing conditions. Two principal implications for research design follow from
the adaptive stance of collaborative governance. First, to small and large degrees, and at
different levels, all collaborative designs differ from one another. For situated research, the
variability in collaborative designs means that, to as yet unknown degrees, each study of
collaboration in situ must be grounded in the specific conditions and structures of the particular
process studied. The second implication of adaptive collaborative governance for empirical,
longitudinal research is that research designs, especially if they are well grounded in
particularities of the collaborative process, can be undone when the process adapts to changes on
the ground. If change is inherent in collaboration governance processes, in situ longitudinal
research designs also must be open to revision. Therefore, an emergent research design is best
suited to the study of collaborative governance.
Research design includes all aspects of a study (e.g., paradigm, theory, methods, and presentation; see Maxwell, 2008). In the simplest terms, an emergent design is one that does not fix a study’s perspectives, data-collection procedures, and other structural and conceptual dimensions prior to investigation. Merz (2002) described two types of emergent research: those taking a linear approach and those operating bidirectionally/nonsequentially. The fundamental difference between linear and bidirectional emergence is that the latter allows questioning of foundations that traditionally structure research questions, methods, and methodologies (i.e., epistemological assumptions implicit in specific methods). *Emergent linear research designs* have foundational habits, foregrounding a static paradigm (e.g., constructivism, deconstruction, or dialectics) and limiting emergence “to the last phases, the methods and presentation” (Merz, p. 143). These approaches ask theoretically derived questions and/or work to reduce empirical complexity. In contrast, *bidirectional/nonsequential research designs* assume that paradigms, although necessary, are subject to critical reflection in situ; in those approaches, “emergence could occur at any point” (Merz, p. 143).

Emergent design is employed most often in the linear sense. Holding a paradigm stable, linear emergence allows unpredictable events/data to influence conceptual focus and analytic attention regarding questions and/or interpretations. Practical conditions of collaborative governance as situational and proessually adaptive, however, suggest, at present (and/or until more robust understanding of collaborative designs and process in practice are cultivated), that situated, longitudinal research will need to be emergent in the bidirectional/nonsequential sense of the term.1 The many directions in which collaborative processes might adapt in response to known and unknown events need to be accounted for in a situated design. If researchers adopt a paradigm that is fitted to a collaborative design, and that process design changes, the utility of
the paradigm might collapse, and if research questions, data, and tentative conclusions are tied to that paradigm, researchers suddenly may find themselves unable to proceed as planned, if at all. Bidirectional/nonsequential approaches, however, still require some structures to facilitate sound procedures that facilitate emergence of a logical research design. Below, I discuss the constants placed on this study’s emergent approach, channels erected to manage emergent elements, and conceptual labels that facilitated analytic attention as the design of the study emerged.

**Constant Themes**

Bidirectional/nonsequential emergence might suggest a starting point in-between theory, method, and situation, wherein a study, at the outset, has no direction; typically, that is not likely the case. As Schwandt (1997) explained, research begins with the intention of seeking to “understand and portray some problem, event, issue, concept, life and so on” (p. 35). Researchers’ disciplinary training, knowledge of paradigms, theories, and existing research, and subjects of personal interests conspire to provide tentative ground for emergent projects that seek to understand something. Researchers, therefore, “should have given careful thought in advance . . . [to] how that understanding can be developed and how claims made about a social phenomenon can be warranted. (Schwandt, p. 35).

The topic of research interest and its understanding are inextricably linked, forming what Maxwell (2008) called “conceptual frameworks,” with “prior work provid[ing] modules that you can use in building your conceptual framework” (p. 223). Traditionally, “prior work” has meant extant theory and research, insights and limitations of which define both research focus and approach (see Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). To those foundational ideals, naturalistic inquiry (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985) added another, more subjective module: that of researchers’ experiential knowledge. In entering into this research, as described below, I drew on all those
modules to loosely define constants around which the study’s bidirectional/nonsequentially emergent design took shape.

Prior to the present investigation, I had conducted several situated, short-term (a few weeks) and long-term (a year or more) investigations of governing and community development processes (see Konieczka, 2010a, 2010b). Principally, my interest at the outset of this research was to understand better if and how stakeholder governance produced relational transformation(s) in interactive talk and social discourses, starting with the assumption that such a research agenda is approached best by attending to questions/issues of collective identity as communicatively constituted categories. As noted in Chapter 2, a constant assumption of this research was that if stakeholder governance could lead to relational transformation, those effects would be visible in local communication, particularly in talk among and talk about parties with relevant collective interests–identities. I did not, however, fix guiding paradigms (save for constructivist ideals, if not a particular constructivist perspective), theories, or methods.

Leaving those latter guides undefined was a conscious decision that continually was revisited throughout the study, the closure/solidification of which, as becomes obvious in the analysis, events in situ never allowed. Over time, this stance came to support what the CCG’s designer and first facilitator told me early in the process: “You won’t know what to ask until it’s over” (Bryant, personal communication) The primary concern early in the research was how to ensure grounded responses to questions that not only had not yet been posed but were not even thinkable at the time. The following section addresses how I worked to ensure that such data were available without imposing direction on the overall research design.
Channeling Data Collection

As the term “constant” is used here, it should be considered to represent something that floats but is fixed. Buoys and tethered balloons are an example of such objects. Together, constants of this study form a space of changing contours with absolute limits; the four “buoys” could only ever be as far apart or as close together as their tethers allowed, but their relative positions constantly changed. By holding constant an interest in relational transformation, talk, social discourses, and collectivity, machinations of the research site that were out of my control could be bounded from start to finish without prematurely imposing the analytically necessary constraints of paradigmatic, theoretical, or methodological assumptions. In no area of the study was the existence of such a channel more important than with respect to data gathering.

Holding constant relational transformation, talk, social discourses, and collectivity provided the means to conduct data collection within a channel, such that at the end of the collaboration, the collected data would be useful for whatever conceptual foci and analytic framework (within that channel) emerged. Based on the constant of transformation, the first principle of data collection was temporal completeness, such that whatever data were to be collected, it was essential that they were more than fragments or snapshots. If change was to be assessed, there was a need for data from across the process, and, optimally, from as many “moments” and from as many perspectives as were available and/or accessible. The constant of talk led me to record the audio of every public meeting about and of the CCG process, which resulted in capturing unscripted and unsolicited (by myself) talk during those public meetings. At the outset, my goal for data that related to social discourses primarily was directed toward materials directly related to the collaborative process. However, as documents, newspaper clippings, reports, and other materials were collected, a larger picture began to emerge, one that
sent me looking for materials across more than 100 years of history of Boulder’s Open Space. Finally, the constant of collectivity, in the end, primarily was of value analytically, but not in relation to data collection. However, holding an interest in collectivity steady may have brought into frame certain data of social discourses that, otherwise, I might not have encountered. Together, all of those data, along with others that are tangential to this report, constitute what I call the corpus, a collection of local talk and social discourses across more than a century, from which smaller sets of data were selected to conduct the analysis presented here, only after conceptual foci emerged.

**Emergent Conceptual Direction(s)**

As the process observed unfolded, and relevant data were gathered, information collected was not managed in light of the constants named above, for do so would have imposed (contingent) foundations on the structure of the corpus, an act rendering data informative for some purposes, but, at the same time, halting emergence of other avenues of investigation. The corpus, therefore, is a historical record, not an analytic one; data collected were organized according to phases of the collaborative process, parties to the process, type of media, and other objective criteria that facilitated description of the process studied. Organization of data around the constants for interpretive purposes, for the most part, was deferred until the observational dimensions of the research were completed, a moment reached at the conclusion of the collaborative process, itself. Below, I discuss the translation of those data from a historical record to interpretive databases at length, addressing, here, only how the constants, historical record, and postobservational preliminary review in-between the two (along with a splash of happenstance) led to the emergence of “stakeholder” as the guiding concept for this report.
In discourses central to this study, stakeholder(s) is a concept of both weak and strong paradigmatic influence, as well as a term without conceptual meaning (e.g., as used in public governance literature). My understanding of stakeholder at the outset of the research behind this report came from the public governance literature, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, employs “stakeholder” with little regard for its conceptual explications in other areas of study (i.e., business ethics) or its potential to acquire useful conceptual meaning within discourses of public governance. In other words, as a tool for making sense of data in the corpus, stakeholder was not a term with conceptual purchase in discourses from and into which the emergent design sought to speak. Additionally, among the millions of words uttered and written (as well as other symbolic actions) by various parties across the 2-year life span of the CCG (as well as the historical record), the word stakeholder(s) was absent from local discourses.

Using representation as an organizing construct for the four constants allowed analytic progress to be made, but the question remained: representation of what? Late in the analytic work, during a chance exchange, a third party categorized my representation of the study as attempting to address concerns of stakeholder representation. Introduction of “stakeholder(s)” into the design of the study had its problems, such as the need to integrate yet another literature into an already complicated picture, and the grounding of that literature in contexts of corporate governance that are quite different from the public forum at the center of this study. Such troubles, however, were greatly outweighed by ways in which the stakeholder concept spoke directly to realities observed on the ground and in the corpus, as well the nearly seamless fit between that concept and issues of communication, collectivity, and categories. It was in attempting to work in-between those affordances and constraints that the postfoundational and postcritical ethnographic stance, detailed in Chapter 1, emerged.
In closing this review of how major elements of the research design emerged in bidirectional/nonsequential ways, it should be noted that emergence of the design also was structured/contained by more or less static ideals about how data would be analyzed. Although ideal analytic procedures changed at the margins throughout the research process, almost nothing in the project was as stable and structuring as commitments to an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis.

**Analytic Ideals In-between Texts**

Ethnography, as discussed previously, is best conceptualized not as a research method but as a way of thinking relationally about the world, and of practicing empirical research with the world as it is. If anything at all is explained, when “methods” are discussed in ethnography/ethnographic texts, common terms are “participant-observation” and “interviews.” As foundations of ethnography, those practices are data-collection methods that tell the reader nothing about how the data gathered were made sense of to arrive at what can be described as the ethnography. Keesing and Jolly (1992) described the finished ethnography as an *ethnographic narrative*, “ways of representing the individuals whose lives we have shared, the communities within which we have worked, and the wider systems that impinge on them” (p. 229). To construct ethnographic narratives, researchers must gather data and organize them into tales that go beyond description, linking social practices and meanings under specific cultural and temporal conditions. The creation of ethnographic narratives requires analysis of data collected, and all ethnographers engage in such acts, but there is a deficit of explication about how to analyze ethnographic data and how ethnographic data were analyzed by researchers.

Many descriptions of doing ethnography (see, e.g., Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001; Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Fetterman, 2010; Janesick, 2000; J. S. Jones & Watt,
2010; Madden, 2010; O’Reilly, 2012; Pertti, 2013), and descriptions of having done ethnography (see e.g., Eliasoph, 1998; Whyte, 1993) never get beyond description of data collection to the analytic procedures employed (see, however, S. B. Heath, 2012). If the meaning of “analysis” is stretched to include such “analytic methods” as case study, document analysis, and grounded theory (the latter used in a nonexact sense), those common terms in ethnographies are used, mostly, without specific explication, even when literature exists. In one of the most potent critiques from within, Wacquant (2002) described contemporary ethnography as a practice wherein “rationalism gives way to sentimentalism, reportage trumps analysis, and witnessing smothers theory” (p. 1526). The ethical call for transparency demands that this white space of ethnographic discourse be filled in, but there are pragmatic benefits to ethnography from being clearer about what it takes to construct an ethnographic narrative, and what it took to construct a given ethnographic tale.

What researchers do with their qualitative data to arrive at conclusions most often is a profound mystery, and a great weakness of such approaches, generally, as well as in the struggle for recognition of such approaches as trustworthy and relevant. This section orients the reader to a particular form of qualitative data analysis described as “discourse analysis” (DA). Itself a contested term, “discourse analysts” do agree that DA is concerned with interactional talk, social discourses, and textual analysis (see, e.g., Brown & Yule, 1983; Jaworksi & Coupland, 1999; Johnstone, 2008; Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002; Nuna, 1993; Paltridge, 2006; N. Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Renkema, 2004; Titscher, Meyer, & Wodak, 2000; van Dijk, 1985; Wodak & Krzyżnowski, 2008). Most discourse analysts likely would say that their analytic practice also is among the most transparent of all qualitative approaches, because discourse analysts typically provide the reader with excerpts of transcribed talk that they then analyze to demonstrate claims
about those data. Although that is good practice, one limitation of DA is that it can and does make claims from exceptionally small pieces of data. Much can be learned from those little excerpts, but they always will be suspect to the critical reader. As discourse theories grow more numerous and accepted, DA has been moving away from texts and talk, to texts and talk in discourses, linking the social with the interactional. Methodological explication of that process, however, remains limited.

This section introduces two approaches that have made strides towards description of procedures in-between DA and ethnography. In the end, however, neither approach gets too far beyond extant presentations of either discourse or ethnographic data analysis, much less data analysis at their intersections. Building on those work, the following sections discuss analytic procedures that were employed to construct this study’s ethnographic narrative. The purpose of the section is to relate those procedures that I employed to established frameworks that informed how the corpus was managed during the observational period, how data from the corpus were selected for analysis, and how data collected were rendered into forms that facilitated analysis and narrative reconstruction.

**Action-Implicative Discourse Analysis**

Grounded in variants of DA but cutting against other forms, K. Tracy (2005) presented action-implicative DA (AIDA) as a methodological arm of *grounded practical theory* (see Craig & Tracy, 1995), which pursues situated ideals of/for practical action. As K. Tracy (2005) put it, “AIDA presumes that people are choosing how to act in order to achieve or avoid certain outcomes . . . [and] takes usefulness (for thinking and acting wisely) as the most important criterion for assessing an analysis” (pp. 301–302). Focused on “everyday interaction” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 303), AIDA has three assumptions that guide such an analysis. First, AIDA assumes
that “a specific discourse move is a routine practice for attending to a more general interactional goal” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 303). In other words, the many instances of a communicative habit suggest that something more is occurring than simply talk; specifically, that actors have goals (which they pursue in talk) that can be understood by examining talk. Second, AIDA “assumes . . . evaluation of conversational action is always a culturally inflected judgment” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 303); to understand a speech act, either as an analyst or as an interlocutor, demands a cultural frame, and, therefore, a text (e.g., a transcript of talk) cannot be interpreted without accounting for where, when, and by whom speech occurred. Third, “AIDA is primarily interested in studying interaction between persons from different communities” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 303), with those communities described as collectives of institutional categories. The focus of AIDA is not necessarily talk between members of various sociocultural communities but talk between members of various collectives (or communities) within an organized relation (e.g., the state, workplace, or local government), where broad sociocultural norms, more or less, are shared.

Like DA, in general, AIDA is not a step-by-step guide to analysis but a heuristic. Johnstone (2008) described a heuristic as “a set of discovery procedures for systematic application or a set of topics for systematic consideration . . . that do not need to be followed in any particular order, and there is no fixed way of following them” (p. 9–10). Heuristics, like constellations of theories, establish a bounded space for reflection, analysis, and reconstruction, but they provide “no guarantee that using it will result in a single definitive explanation” (Johnstone, p. 10). Within the primary methods of DA writ large (i.e., transcription and repeated listening), AIDA maintains three central methodological heuristics—practice frames, ethnographic background, and interesting data—each of which is discussed below.
First, in light of its institutional focus, AIDA foregrounds practices. Within the heuristic of AIDA, “practice . . . is a way of unitizing the social world to enable analysis” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 306). The types of units that K. Tracy (2005) had in mind were phenomena such as meetings and classroom discussions, as well as conceptual forms, such as deliberation and dialogue. Practice, however, is “a usefully elastic term” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 306), and “labeling a practice and its functions one way rather than another will suggest different interactional problems, conversational strategies, and situated ideals about conduct” (Tracy, 2005, p. 306). Furthermore, practices are embedded within practices. The practice frame can get complex, but that complexity is a resource, not a limitation. In the following reconstruction, practices of categorizing, identification, and representation are examined within the focal practice of collaborative stakeholder governance.

The second methodological aspect of AIDA is the ethnographic background informing interpretation/analysis of the discourse. According to K. Tracy (2005), “Instances of transcribed talk are the focus of analysis, but they are interpreted within an institutional frame that is informed by participant observation, interviewing of members, and study of organizationally important documents” (p. 304). If discourse is considered as a tripartite concept, at one level, a system of interpretation, and then at the levels of spoken talk and social discourse, with institutional frames relating the three levels, facilitating AIDA’s interest in “connecting small-d discourse with the shape of big-D discourse” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 304). Like practices, institutional frames are social constructions, and naming channels thought and analysis in certain directions and not in others. The institutional frame for the following reconstruction are practices of stakeholder governance related to public conservation and recreation park management.
Third, AIDA attends to interesting data. A position distinct from other forms of DA that concentrate on the mundane, an AIDA analysis begins by looking for “problems, interactional strategies, and ideals-in-use within existing communicative practices” (K. Tracy, 2005, p. 301). What is considered to be interesting, of course, is a subjective matter structured by the practice(s) of interest, the institutional frame adopted, and data themselves. K. Tracy (2005) described the selection and transcription of interesting data as a “theoretically shaped activity” (p. 310). During the research that informs this report, interesting data appeared at every turn; data selection was not a search for the interesting but identification of the most theoretically informative interesting data. Through several recursive iterations between theories and reflection on events constituting the subject of analysis (i.e., stakeholder representation), the most interesting data that best told the ethnographic story (within the practices and institutions named above) were identified. Not all events during the process studied that spoke to emergent concerns are presented in the reconstruction but each story within the narrative is representative of practices that were pervasive in the local discourse, and that are demonstrable generalizable features.

In summary, AIDA is an approach to doing DA that takes sociocultural contextual features of the site as being important for understanding talk and social discourses as enacted within specific institutional practices. K. Tracy’s (2005) description of AIDA, however, did not explain how the ethnographic can or should be integrated with the discursive in analysis; at this point in AIDA’s development, each analyst adopting the approach understands and approaches the intersection of ethnography and DA differently. Hardly unusual for either DA or ethnography, variation in methods for melding the two, perhaps, are unavoidable, but in practical terms, there is in statements on AIDA no means of evaluating use of the approach beyond
traditional criteria of qualitative research (e.g., compelling argument, trust in author, and enough description to ground claims). In the following section, another ethnographically informed alternative to traditional DA is discussed that provides a bit more description of how DA and ethnography might interact at the analytic phase of such investigations.

**Discourse-Historical Approach**

Whereas K. Tracy (2005) placed AIDA within the paradigm of grounded practical theory, Wodak (2001) introduced the discourse-historical approach (DHA) as a methodological explication of critical discourse analysis (CDA; see, e.g., Machin & Mayr, 2010; R. Rogers, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA is an approach to DA grounded in ideals of critical theory, and, in contrast to AIDA and other DA (and most ethnography), explicitly is driven by theoretical critiques of society, power, and control. According to Wodak, CDA “follows a complex concept of social critique . . . [wherein] the analyst exceeds the purely textural or discourse internal sphere” (pp. 64, 65). In other words, relying on assumptions embedded in theory (and, specifically, critical theory), CDA aims to move analysis beyond immediate talk and texts to general social norms and their influences, as defined in extant theories. Where CDA improves on many existing approaches to critique is in its commitment to data (see Putnam, Bantz, Deetz, Mumby, & Van Maanan, 1993); application of the approach may not ground its questions or concerns in the local but it always employs empirical evidence to support its claims. Although CDA employs empirical data to support its arguments, it is criticized from directions such as AIDA for being predisposed to its conclusions, and, therefore, critiqued as ideologically driven commentary, not “analysis.” The DHA, primarily, is an attempt to reduce the space for such criticisms of CDA by integrating sociohistorical context and data into the analysis.
In specific terms, DHA seeks, according to Wodak (2001), “to minimize the risk of being biased” by working with “different approaches, multimethodologically on the basis of a variety of empirical data as well as background information,” attempting to demonstrate “diachronic change” in discourses, and to integrate “social theories to be able to explain the so-called context” (p. 65). Wodak categorized context at four levels: (a) the immediate talk or texts; (b) intertextual and interdiscursive relations of “utterance, texts, genres, and discourses” (p. 67); (c) nonlinguistic sociocultural variables and frames unique to a specific context (e.g., K. Tracy’s, 2005, practices); and (d) the present and historical social environment that give meaning to immediate talk and texts. According to Wodak, attention to those levels of context assist in making “sequential analysis transparent” (p. 67). Such transparent DHA follows four principals: (a) it is interdisciplinary at multiple levels (e.g., individual works, collected works, and production of works); (b) it is problem oriented, abductive, practice oriented, and employs locally and practically relevant concepts (i.e., strives for grounded and useful interpretations attentive to issues that affect real people); (c) works to integrate in analysis multiple theories, genres, and spaces of the social and the discursive (but views grand theories as foundational and middle-range theories as analytic tools); and (d) strives to integrate theories and methods—“always incorporates fieldwork and ethnography” (Wodak, p. 69)—and brings historical context to bear on analysis.

With the exception of its adoption of a foundational stance in relation to critical theory, DHA is a good extension of analytic ideals contained in AIDA, providing more details about how analysis can operate in-between ethnographic and discourse data. However, like AIDA, DHA names principles of such analysis and describes relationships between its elements, but it is quiet on how to gather and construct datasets that facilitate such movements. Again, the lack of
methodological explication, although not unusual in discourses of qualitative analysis, is a limitation to those who might seek to adopt and/or to evaluate a study by adhering to the principles and relationships that are defined in DHA.

Wodak (2001), however, held that “it is not possible to provide a really extensive application of the discourse-historical approach and all its categories in one short chapter . . . [and that] the most important procedures to be used in the analysis of specific texts” (p. 93). Those procedures, however, were extremely general. For example, the primary analytic procedures were explained as “operationaliz[ing] the research question into linguistic categories . . . [and] applying these categories sequentially on to the text while using theoretical approaches to interpret the meanings resulting from research questions” (Wodak, p. 93). Despite the fact that Wodak explained that such choices “have to be made explicit and have to be justified” (p. 93), as presented, to date, DHA has not offered details as to what qualities of ethnographic and discourse data make them more or less ideal for moving between culture and texts, how analysts might gather and organize such ethnographic and discourse data, or how those data might be organized and managed to facilitate analysis.

In short, DHA provides a destination without a map for making the journey. Again, this lack of methodological explication is an always-present problem for qualitative methods, to which scholars have paid far too little attention. Although qualitative researchers might hold that their practices at the level of analysis cannot be represented, that stance limits both the ability of analysts to be transparent about their processes and the capacity of third parties to judge the mechanics of the analysis, which weaken individual reports and frustrate attempts to defend conclusions as being nonideological. Below, I describe how ideals from AIDA and DHA (e.g., attention to texts and talk, use of ethnographic data, and a role for theory) informed this report’s
data-collection and analytic procedures. However, because neither approach provides an adequate description of its procedures, I adopt neither AIDA nor DHA by name as the analytic-interpretive stance(s) of this report; instead, I move in-between these two complementary approach and detail actions taken in data collection, reduction, and analysis that adhere to principles of those approaches. Where I diverge from both is in rejection of AIDA’s rejection of theory, and DHA’s foundational stance.

**Data Collection, Reduction, and Preparation**

As explained previously, data informing this report were gathered over time from multiple sources in an “undirected” manner, resulting in the corpus. A common “method” in linguistics, the corpus, in that discipline, is a scientific sample of a language from which general conclusions can be evidenced (see Roe, 2007; Schuurman, 2008). The corpus, in copra linguistics, is the dataset for analytic work. My use of corpus is slightly different form the linguistic version, as, here, the term refers to my attempt to capture as much data as possible about local social discourses in situ and historically; the immediate talk, texts, and events produced and reproduced during the CCG; and other information about the community and its members studied. In this respect, the corpus is an historical achieve from which data can be extracted for analysis; it is not a dataset that can be employed to address a given research question without future rendering and reduction of data that it contains. This section describes the content of the corpus, procedures through which it was constructed, how specific datasets were extracted to respond to questions/problems that emerged as the process was observed, and how those selected datasets were made useful to respond analytically to those questions/problems.
Data Collection

During the planning and conducting of the CCG, three primary types of data were collected: observations, recording of observed events, and archival documents. The following sections describe each type of data collected.

Observations and recordings. If there is one quality that typically differentiates ethnography from other qualitative data-collection methods, it is the process of observing (or participating in) lived experiences of research participants over a prolonged period of time. In some cases, such as this research, observation of events may be all that is possible, but even then, observation must result in a record of what was observed (e.g., field notes). Hence, although observation is a particular data-collection method, it can be divided into how and when observations occurred, and how observations were recorded for later use. Below, I describe the observational work of the research informing this study, and various ways that those observations and events observed were represented and preserved.

Observing the CCG as an individual was difficult; the subject of the study required a team of observers to keep close tabs on events occurring in and around the process, and, sometimes, even more observers would not have been enough to actually collected substantive observational data. The first meeting of the CCG in October 2009, for example, was arranged so hastily that even some CCG members were not aware that it had occurred. I only learned about that meeting after the fact, when inquiring about the start date for the process. With one or two other exceptions, my observations of the CCG process’s public meetings—from planning to completion—were comprehensive. Over the life span of the WTSA CCG, I attended nearly every planning meeting, CCG meeting, meetings of the OSBT where the CCG was a topic, and public open houses. Meeting observations totaled about 200 hours over 16 months.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of text</th>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Collections</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Observations and Recordings</td>
<td>CCG meetings</td>
<td>31 (110 hrs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting transcripts</td>
<td>Apx. 70 hours;</td>
<td>500,000 words</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30 CCG meetings over</td>
<td>15 months;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSBT meetings</td>
<td>11 (33 hrs)</td>
<td>Group and Process</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>110 hours</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listening sessions</td>
<td>2 (5 hrs)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Apx. 70 hours;</td>
<td>500,000 words</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Constituting caucus</td>
<td>1 (10 hrs)</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meeting evaluations</td>
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<td>Spoken comments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Governing</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Visitor Master Plan</td>
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<td>OS long-range management plan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Statements</td>
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At every meeting that I attended, at least three, and sometimes four (or more), types of records were made. First and foremost, audio (and, in a few cases, video) recordings were made. In the few cases where I was unable to attend a meeting, recordings made by the convening agency later were provided by that organization. In one special case—the CCG member-selection meeting—multiple recording devices were set up to capture multiple conversations that occurred simultaneously. All recordings were digitally recorded in public forums, and, during data collection, were titled with dates and description (e.g., CCG 10-15-2009 Kickoff), and archived in the corpus.

Along with recordings, observational field notes were scribed, the depth of which were variable. At the outset of the research, everything was new, and field notes, once written up, were many typed pages long. Over time, the subject became more clearly defined, somewhat predicable (e.g., meeting formats were fairly stable), and my understanding of the situation improved, such that fewer and fewer items need to be recorded in field notes. Late in the process, when CCG members began discussing plan proposals, field notes became almost useless, as CCG members gathered in a tight circle around a table (see Figure 3.1), such that what was occurring at the table was not visible and what was said often made reference to objects that members could see but that the audience could not. As time progressed, field notes became less about recording the mundane (audio recordings were better for that purpose) and more about highlighting unusual events that recordings would not capture (e.g., CCG members’ nonverbal behavior).

Recordings and field notes were augmented by documents that the CCG produced. From its conceptualization to the final meeting, the CCG process generated hundreds of pages of documentation, and thousands of pages informed the process (the latter is discussed below).
From meeting agendas to meeting minutes, and CCG work products to individual members’ proposals, the paper trail created by the process is long and dense. Consisting mostly of digital materials, documents generated by the CCG process were collected and stored in folders named for the date of the meeting where the document was distributed or generated.

Figure 3.1. Community Collaboration Group representatives discussing options (June 2010)
Note: In the image, CCG members are joined by Open Space staff; a staff member (page left) is standing on a chair for a better view. Source: Author

Finally, when appropriate, photographic documentation of the WTSA CCG was gathered. It would have been nice to have taken more photographs from the process, but during CCG meetings, I sought to be as invisible as possible, and, hence, kept the number of photographs to a minimum. During large public meetings, tens of photographs recorded what occurred in a way that captured something different from the audio, documents, and field notes (see Collier & Collier, 1986; Hockings, 2009; Norris, 2002; Pink, 2007; Wagner, 1979; Werner, 1996).

Archival materials. Pursuing, over time, the impossible task of capturing all phenomena of the fleeting CCG process in multiple and overlapping forms, without imposing an analytic or interpretive purpose on those data, created a record of the CCG process through which one can
move from pervasive elements of structure to a passing comment without the need for wide interpretive gaps, and that served as a form of triangulation during analysis. Making sense of the CCG, however, is not possible from within the CCG process, itself, as its impetus, purpose, and enactment cannot be understood in the absence of the history and historical records leading to (and, in some cases, following) the process. Given that Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks now is a 100-year-old program, a decision about what history is significant in the present, essentially, is a matter determined by the object (i.e., conceptual foci) of study. Reflecting on the processes of collecting those data, three primary sources come into focus: government records, media reports, and the unbounded realm of the internet. Below, I briefly comment on the scope of those searches and materials gathered, moving from the broadest to the most specific level.

Although a regular user/visitor to Open Space, at the beginning of the project, my knowledge of the program (i.e., the governing structure, relationships, and significant individuals and groups) virtually was nonexistent; consequently, early effort was put into gathering information about the program and community history. More and better information, ultimately, was provided by the CCG process itself, but by scouring the internet for information about the CCG and the Open Space program, it was possible to begin to view relationships between events during the CCG process in broader contexts. Early exploratory internet searches usually were not conducted to find specific information but to garner a picture of how the Open Space program had developed historically, and the recent history that led the Open Space community to constitute the CCG. These searches, although uncovering interesting and informative resources, did not identify data that were particularly useful for analytic purposes, as materials were singular and without context.
An exception to the rule of internet searches providing limited data was the website of *The Daily Camera*, a local Boulder, CO daily newspaper. *The Daily Camera* archives provided two types of data: one containing useful background information (but with limitations, discussed later) through news articles, and the other offering a complete collection of letters to the editor across several years. As listed in Table 3.1, many news articles are included in the corpus, almost all of them from *The Daily Camera*. Lexis-Nexis’s archive of *The Daily Camera* articles also was consulted. Those articles provided both a picture of the media as a member of the Open Space community and historical accounts of recent events that informed my understanding of the community. Letters to the editor are of another order. *The Daily Camera* achieves all letters to the editor received (not just those published) on a public blog, from which I gathered hundreds.\(^3\)

At the margins, I delved into the long record of historical articles and letters related to the Open Space program, but my attention focused most squarely on texts covering recent historical events (2001 forward) and public letters about the CCG process.

Finally, government websites were consulted. Although both the City of Boulder Department of Open Spaces and Mountain Parks’ (OSMP) website and the Boulder City Council website were examined, information on the OSMP website proved to be more useful, and included much of the city-level (and county-level) information necessary to inform the study. In some respects, it is possible to say that OSMP’s website was a primary data source. In addition to CCG meeting documents, the OSMP website provided several other collections that were essential to understanding and reconstructing the CCG. Those materials can be divided into categories of plans and policies, public comments, records of official meetings (e.g., governing board meetings), research studies, and city and third-party public opinion surveys.
In the aggregate, documents from OSMP’s archives provided the most detailed picture of historical events leading to the CCG, issues at stake in the process, and relations between members and audiences of the CCG on a historical scale. As detailed in Table 3.1, hundreds of government documents containing thousands of pages were obtained. However, the full scope of how those documents would inform the present report was not known, or even visible, prior to the completion of the CCG. Hence, systematic attention to official documents began in earnest late in the data-collection phases, during what I call “preliminary analysis,” where management of the corpus as a historical record began to bleed into a conceptual focus on the emergent research subject. The next section addresses that intermediary phase during which this report’s foci were identified through constant comparison between data points, and between data and theoretical ideals discussed in the previous chapter.

Data Reduction

In qualitative data analysis, all collection, transformation, and reordering of data changes what can be viewed and understood (see Cutcliffe, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Wolcott, 1990). When qualitative data are organized for analysis and interpretation, often, steps are not recorded (or reported) and, consequently, much information is lost, perhaps without even recognizing that loss. Cognizant of that issue, and facing the task of recording the emergent (and disappearing) CCG, the corpus was organized along descriptive dimensions of time, event, and parties to the CCG.

To conduct conceptual analysis without disrupting the corpus library (as well as making location of files easier), a spreadsheet, called the “document database,” was created and populated with metadata about files in the corpus. Organized by document type (e.g., policy plan, letter to the editor, or news article), source (e.g., CCG meeting or OSBT meeting), date of
release, and author (when relevant), the document database had little to no conceptual structure. The document database, however, did allow for the global perspective that was necessary to begin to draw conceptual relations and, simultaneously, to allow the corpus structure (i.e., the organization of folders) to adapt to the subject.

This section describes how the corpus was reviewed, sifted, and sorted into clearly defined datasets that grounded and then informed this report’s object of interest. I discuss only the end states of three phases through which this process moved: (a) review of the contents of materials in the corpus, (b) selection of sets (or collections) of source materials that provided the highest quality and most comprehensive data related to the conceptual foci (or object) identified during preliminary analysis, and (c) reduction of materials in those collections to manageable quantities through the construction of focused data sets.

From corpus to collections. Although historical documents were of some use, the span of time between 2001 and 2011 became the first division of the corpus into data that were used to frame the CCG, and information that would not be used in this report’s reconstruction. Unless directly relevant to the CCG, or events between 2001 and 2011 that led to or informed this analysis of the CCG, materials in the corpus produced prior to 2001 were framed as being outside of this study’s analytic focus.

A formidable decade in the history of Open Space and Mountain Parks, and, perhaps, the most heavily documented, scoping the study to the 2001–2011 time period did little to reduce the amount of data available for analysis and reconstruction. Bracketing that period, however, brought into relief some datasets and pushed others aside, allowing for a focus on the remaining materials from the most immediate and impactful (in relation to the CCG) history. Each set was assessed for its historical completeness and the fidelity and integrity of its data.
Historical completeness refers to how well a given dataset represented stretches of time. The longer and more complete the historical period covered by materials in a given collection, the greater the collection’s historical completeness. Fidelity concerns how well content of source materials represented events; a story of a conversation reported in a newspaper, for instance, had less fidelity than did audio or video recordings. Finally, integrity indicates the degree to which data in a set had a comprehensive complexity; the conversation discussed above may have been reported in meeting minutes, but if a transcript of the meeting existed, the latter had more integrity. How these ideals affected data drawn on in this report is not complex and can be illustrated with an example.

On the Wing is the monthly newsletter of the Boulder County Audubon Society (see http://www.boulderaudubon.org), several issues of which are contained in the corpus. Newsletters from organized interest groups represent the publishing organization with a high degree of fidelity, but the integrity of events reported may be low due to partisanship. Good data have both high fidelity and high integrity, but optimal data also are historically complete. Because only some issues of On the Wing from some years were available, that set did not fulfill the condition of historical completeness, a status that applied to all publications from organized groups. Viewed holistically from several directions (e.g., whether the value of the data overshadowed low integrity, fidelity, or historical completeness), the collection of organized interest newsletters proved to be a less than optimal dataset, and, hence, those data are not part of the formal analysis. Other sets were selected for exclusion or inclusion through similar reviews.

Not all datasets needed to be assessed in this manner, as several of the most critical (e.g., those containing information about the CCG) were constructed by the author with conditions of integrity, fidelity, and completeness in mind. In addition to sets of data from the CCG, two other
collections were identified as having high fidelity and high integrity, along with historical
completeness: (a) meeting minutes from the Open Space governing board, the Open Space Board
of Trustees (OSBT); and (b) official OSMP plans and policies. Together, these three
collections—materials for the CCG, OSBT meeting minutes, and OSMP plans and policies—
were the only data sources used to ground conceptual direction and to reconstruct the CCG in
terms attentive to communicative practices of stakeholder representation. The reason for scoping
the data to such subsets was simple: By defining with a high degree of specificity what data were
employed, making that determination on (somewhat) objective criteria, and straining to use,
primarily, publicly available data (or data that could be made public), this study gains rigor, and, in
theory, the capacity for third-party evaluation. In short, an effort was made to increase the
internal validity of the study by tightening and explicating what ethnographic data were
analyzed, by selecting (generally) publicly available data collections that were board, deep,
detailed, and accurate enough to stand alone. The next section describes how data in those
collections were employed to locate in the subject of study a means of considering the object of
study.

**From collections to databases.** Identification of data collections—coherent subsets from the corpus—opened a way to pursue conceptual foci without altering the corpus. In this
section, I summarize what materials each collection contained, how information was extracted
for analysis from those sources, and the final form of each collection as employed in the
reconstruction. As a means of organizing this discussion, I gather the collection of CCG
materials under the heading of “the group,” the collection of OSBT meeting minute as data
concerning the CCG’s “environment,” and the collection of plans and policies as “policy
discourses.” Categorizing the collections as group, environment, and discourse highlights the
transitional nature of this section, for although those terms are descriptive, they also are conceptual ways of talking about major variables in the study of collectivity, categories, and stakeholders.

Before proceeding, a few common traits of the databases as employed in the remainder of this study are noted. First, each database is as complete a reproduction of its source material as possible. Different source media and the shape of their content means that each database was constructed differently, with the common aim of making a copy of content from source documents (in a different form) that was as close to the original as possible in terms of completeness, fidelity, and integrity. The degree to which the databases reflect source documents was successful, in part, due to all of the collections employed containing overwhelmingly, if not totally, source materials in digital form. The ease with which digital sources can be transformed means that it is simple to maintain fidelity and integrity with large datasets. Second, all databases were constructed in multiple iterations. Whether spoken or written, every second and every word in each databases was reviewed once, then reviewed again in constructing the database, and then checked against source materials. Essentially a data-reduction process, getting from the collections to the databases followed several steps, each of which shaved context from the data. Essential to getting to a conceptual focus, losing context thins description and, thereby, situated understandings. The databases were constructed in iterations such that, theoretically, a third party could move up and across data points discussed in this report, all the way from a single utterance (admits millions of others) to source documents. Some data and data sources facilitated this movement better than did others, but all were approached with the intention of loosening data, not breaking it away, from its source/context. Finally, all of the content of all databases used to reconstruct the case are textual. The
environment, or context, discussed in this report is constructed at the social and processual levels of meaning, not at the level of a physical situation data. The following section describes the content and organization of the databases.

**Databases**

Three databases were constructed from the corpus and used in this report to reconstruct events and interaction during the CCG. The “group database” contained materials from and concerning the CCG, itself, such as meeting minutes and audio recordings. The “environment database” held information about social discourses about Open Space and the City of Boulder; it included data such as media reports and public comments. The “policy database” was constructed from planning and policy discourses, such as are available in a community’s written constitution, planning discussions, and historical processes. The following sections detail each of the databases.

**The group database.** The subject of 2 years of observation, and surrounding research, materials from the CCG, or group database, constitute the largest and most diverse collection. As discussed above, field notes, recordings, documents, and photographs were collected during observations. In the analytic reconstruction, however, only recordings and documents were employed. Field notes were not particularly informative at all times (e.g., they were of low fidelity), and the study’s focus on language meant that visual/photographic data were not analytically useful for this report. Both field notes and photographs are used to frame and give life to events, but the reconstruction is grounded in talk and texts. Recordings and documents from the CCG were prepared differently but resulted in similar forms: a visible, sortable, and searchable digital text of descriptively and analytically substantive portions of source materials. Below, I first discuss the recordings and then the documents analyzed.
Audio recordings of the WTSA CCG are the most important data to this study, and were the most difficult with regard to creating a database. As noted above, when the CCG ended, I had personal recordings of almost every meeting. Gaps in my collection were filled by the convening agency; the agency also had recordings of meetings of the OSBT concerning the CCG that I did not, which also were obtained. In total, 96 hours of recordings from CCG meetings and OSBT meetings (where the CCG was formally discussed) constituted the first generation of what can be called the CCG database. All of those hours of recordings were listened to repeatedly (at least three times each, and many more times in other cases), and most, but not all, were transcribed word for word, but no further (e.g., intonation, pauses, and other nondiscursive elements of the talk were not represented in the transcript). Nearly 70% of the CCG meetings, covering all of its stages, were fully transcribed. Additionally, for each example discussed in the following chapters that already was not transcribed, the entire topically bounded discussion was transcribed. Sometimes, those portions were as short as 10 minutes; at other times, the conversation lasted 3 hours. In the end, those part increased the total transcription to about 85% of all recordings. At the time of this study, the evolving CCG transcript/database contained more than 500,000 words.

Documents from the CCG were numerous, and many were employed to tell the story of the CCG. The most important CCG documents were CCG meeting minutes, which were composed by OSMP and posted on the WTSA CCG website (hosted and managed by OSMP) following CCG meetings. Minutes contain a record of staff and CCG members attending meetings, public speakers and comments, and CCG meeting topics and notes from the group’s discussions about policy and the CCG process. Minutes from the CCG are not complete without supporting documents that accompanied the meeting agendas and/or meeting minutes, with
those documents varying from formal reports, to staff slide shows, to members’ statements and presentations, to plan options, to decisions, and more.

**The environment database.** The second collection of data used in the reconstruction were recordings and minutes of OSBT meetings, OSBT study sessions, and OSBT retreats. Records of OSBT events, as a set, have high integrity, fidelity, and historical completeness. Whether they were formal decision-making events (i.e., meetings), informal discussion (i.e., study sessions), or spaces for reflection (i.e., retreats), OSBT events were well documented, publicly available, and highly reliable. Two types of OSBT event materials were included in the environment database: audio recordings and meeting minutes. Audio only from the period of observation is included in the database. If I attended a meeting, I made audio recordings. If I did not attend a meeting, I obtained recordings from the OSMP, which also provided recordings of OSBT retreats and study sessions. Different OSBT recordings were used in different ways that required different levels of transcription. With respect to official meetings of the OSBT, meeting minutes served as primary data, with the recordings being available if needed to check information. The purpose of that review was not to question the integrity of the minutes but to hear what, by necessity (and choice), was left out of the minutes. Exceptions were the CCG midcourse review meeting, an OSBT retreat held in July 2010, and an OSBT study session with the CCG that was held in December 2010, each of which was transcribed in full because of its direct implications for the CCG processes.

Meeting minutes of the OSBT were the most historically complete set of data used in this study, constituting a record of almost a decade (2003–2011) of the board’s discussions and community statements to the board. Minutes of OSBT meetings provided data about public interpretations of history and issues, but they also contained OSBT members’ interpretations.
Beginning with the 2003 term and continuing well past the end of the CCG, OSBT meeting minutes were downloaded from OSMP’s website, and records concerning the VMP process (of which the CCG was a part) were reproduced in the environment database. Reconstruction, however, relies on data only from the period during observations of the CCG. As with plans and policies discussed below, OSBT meeting minutes first were read in full and relevant board members’ discussions and public comments were copied, usually in full, into a spreadsheet. Organized and sortable along a number of descriptive variables (e.g., date of meeting, name of speaker, organizational affiliation, and member of board or not), the environment database had approximately 1,000 unique statements totaling about 50,000 words.

**The discourse database.** The last collection carved out of the corpus for this report contains governing documents, plans, and policies of Open Space and Mountain Parks. Included in this collection were all manner of formal governing documents, overarching plans, and specific guidelines governing use and management of the contemporary Open Space system. As the study’s foci emerged through listening to the recordings, and reviewing meeting minutes placed events in historical context, texts in both collections continually referenced governing plans and policies. As the following chapters illustrate, voices in the public sphere had little agreement about Open Space policy discourses at any level, including what words should be used to describe what things, and what definitions words could and could not have. Governing plans and policies were only marginally more explicit in defining terms, but they had the benefit of being common and authoritative texts. Although always contested and often lacking specificity, OSMP governing documents are stable texts to which parties to the CCG (and other texts) could and did refer; understanding the CCG, thus, meant understanding local discourses grounded in those plans and policies.
Framing the Case

All manner of variables or conditions facilitated and constrained the CCG process; this report focuses on the process. Selecting from among the universe of possible conditions of the CCG, those that were most important in shaping and understanding the process was a matter of considerable difficulty, not the least because, at different times, there were different variables in play. For the most part, in this report, salient contextual concerns are addressed in the text at the point where they were relevant to the parties to the CCG; throwing all of those matters on the table here would only create confusion. There were, however, some constant and overarching conditions that influenced the CCG from start to finish. Below, I address three of those conditions—the issues at stake, the CCG structure and time-line, and the parties to the CCG. Because the following chapters provide extensive treatment of these topics, the following sections survey these matters at a general level.

The Issue(s) of the West Trail Study Area

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the CCG was a policy development process for a small but significant area of community conservation and recreation lands constituting an urban–wilderness boundary. Just 5 miles long and, at its deepest, a mile across (just a few hundred feet at its narrowest), the WTSA is a complex natural and social environment, whose planning and management issues, alone, are numerous and daunting. Additionally, those issues must be considered in light of planning and managing for and within not just stakeholder relations (which the analyses shall show, themselves, are interpreted in many ways) but also with regard to changing relations between stakeholders, the managing department, and the land itself. Finally, issues related to the WTSA range from the incredibly minute (e.g., whether a particular trash bin near certain homes should be emptied more frequently) to the expansively global (e.g.,
how the landscape should be managed in light of climate changes), and, at all points in-between, issues overlap in unique ways at specific locations.

This report focuses on meanings of stakeholder(s) and representations of those people (and things) called stakeholders, which, as in most publics, are not issues that permeate discourses independent of other issues. With the exception of the talk and texts reported in the following chapters, there has not been in Boulder, to my knowledge, a focused discussion about who and what is an Open Space stakeholder, how stakeholder concerns should be represented in public discussions, or how stakeholder interests are represented in public policy. However, even the rather direct and sustained discourses of stakeholders and representation reported in this case study were entwined with talk and texts about other issues. WTSA policy issues fall into five key categories: environmental conservation, recreational opportunities, neighborhood concerns, cultural preservation, and obligations of the managing agency. Each of those areas was designated a representative during the CCG process.

**The Community Collaborative Group Process**

From a design perspective, the CCG was a normative ideal of collaborative governance in both source and structure. Facing, in 2008, what the department referred to as “wicked problems” (see Churchman, 1967) within “our most complex TSA to date,” (Tauscher, OSBT 4/22/09) and increasingly unproductive relations between community members, OSMP proposed and then constructed (with the assistance of a consultant) the collaborative process. Although the department already was highly participatory, and previously had conducted small-scale collaborative experiments, the CCG was of a wholly different scale. Whereas past public involvement, including prior collaborative efforts, were constructed to obtain feedback on products developed within established practices (e.g., review and comment), the CCG was an
experiment in participatory policy development from the ground up. In addition to issues summarized above, the CCG had four other conditions that shaped the process, and, as a result, the reconstruction in this report. Below, I briefly discuss three of those components: the time-line, structure, and rules. First, however, a note about the role of the fourth condition: adaptation in OSMP management.

As noted above, adaptation is a hallmark of collaborative governance and collaborative process designs. Additionally, land management agencies, such as OSMP, recently have begun programs of adaptive management, through which policy changes are implemented slowly, their impacts assessed, and revisions are made on an ongoing basis (see Prato, 2012; U.S. Department of the Interior, 2010). Among both collaborative governance and land management scholars and practitioners, there is only limited understanding (most of it tacit) as to how collaborations should adapt, and what it means to perform adaptive management. When paired, the unfixed processes of collaborative planning and adaptive management create a governing environment fraught with uncertainty concerning not just communication and information, and decisions and actions, but the very organization and target of governing. With respect to the analysis of the CCG process, change and adaptation were pervasive. Hence, the time-line, structure, and rules of the WTSA, mentioned below, are presented as they were planned and as they existed at the end of the process; their changes in-between will be discussed across the following chapters.

**Time-line of the Community Collaborative Group.** Planning for the WTSA process began in 2008 with a proposal from OSMP to conduct a traditional top-down planning process. That plan was discarded early in 2009 in favor the collaborative approach, which was developed over the spring and summer of that year. Planned to occur over a 12- to 18-month period beginning in August 2009, the start date of the CCG was delayed due to public protests about
launching such an effort during a time of family vacations and children’s return to school. Ultimately starting in mid-September 2009 with selection of the collaborative group members, the CCG held its first meeting in October 2009. Between October 2009 and March 2010, the group met for 3 hours once a month. Beginning in March 2010, amidst concerns about completing the process in time for a hard deadline for official action (i.e., formal adoption by the city’s government), in early 2011, the CCG began holding meetings biweekly. A few months later, meetings, again, were expanded, this time to 4 hours twice a month, a duration and frequency that remained until the final meetings. Almost all of the CCG’s final meetings went well beyond 4 hours, and, when possible, additional meetings were held. Other forums related to the WTSA CCG (but not, themselves, meetings of the CCG) also occurred. In total, the process, starting in September 2009, occurred over 16 months, across 32 meetings totaling more than 120 hours. Appendix A lists all the meetings of the CCG, and meetings of the OSBT, when it discussed the CCG.

**Community Collaborative Group structure.** The structure of the CCG is treated here as phases through with the process moved during the time-line described above. Similar to the best normative ideals for such process (see Dukes, Firehock, & Birkhoff, 2011; R. G. Heath, 2007; R. G. Heath & Frey, 2004; Innes & Boohner, 2010; Walkers, Daniels, & Cheng, 2006), in design and execution, the CCG had several phases through which the process moved in pursuit of its policy and relational aims. Specifically, at the outset, the CCG was dived into phases in which the group (and its audiences) would learn about issues at stake, develop a work plan, and then deliberate proposals. However, about 6 months into meetings of the CCG, there was a change in facilitators, causing a rupture in the relationship between the planned and the actual structures of the CCG. The change to the structure was not necessarily caused by the change in
facilitators, nor can it be said to have had a significant effect on the CCG’s structure, but it is impossible to know if events may have progressed similarly had the original facilitator remained. Once the new facilitator was involved, the convening agency, facilitator, and group members engaged in a demonstrable search for a way forward. The results of that search structured the final phases of the process, such that the two parts, although not incongruent, certainly do not fit together without gaps. It, thus, could be said that the CCG had two lives. Below, the structure as designed is briefly explicated, followed by ways in which the latter parts were performed (which were not predefined but evolved over time); the discussion is kept short, serving only to introduce general outlines of the process that are discussed at length throughout the following chapters.

Stages of the WTSA CCG design as it stood when the process began in September 2009, were as follows: (a) community orientation, (b) convening, (c) kickoff, (d) collaborative learning, (e) visioning/desired future conditions, and (f) several stages of proposal development and decision making (i.e., scenario building, evaluation of proposals, modification and drafting plan, approval of the plan, and delivery to decision makers). The first stage—community orientation—involved public presentation and discussion of the proposal for the CCG, during which officials and members of the public contributed to development of the structure of the processes. Once the plan for the CCG was developed and the community was informed, the process began to unfold, beginning with the convening stage. At that point, CCG members were selected, followed by early meetings of the group, during which some group-level process decisions were finalized (e.g., ground rules). Collaborative learning was a portion of the process where OSMP policies, data, and planning procedures were presented by the convening agency to CCG members. Visioning/desired future conditions was a moment in the CCG process where
group members began discussing what on-the-ground outcomes they would have liked to see from the process, and it included several tasks that I will not detail here.

Towards the end of the visioning/desired future conditions stage, who was facilitating the CCG’s discussions, and, thereby, assisting the agency with managing the progress of the CCG, changed. Following that change, the trajectory of the CCG remained the same, and, at a high level, the stages of proposal development and decision making did not alter from the design structure. However, by the conclusion of the desired future conditions stage of the CCG, the new facilitator had been integrated into the process, and together with the agency and group members, began to plot a course through the proposal development and decision-making phases. The resultant stages of the CCG as the group engaged its work were: (a) individual plan proposals, (b) area-level plan proposals, (c) plan proposal packages, and (c) approval of the entire set of CCG recommendations.

The first step for the CCG in finding a way forward after the facilitator change involved individual plan proposals, with CCG members making individually developed proposals for any issue anywhere in the WTSA. That process slowly morphed into a similar approach that involved any member bringing a proposal to the table, but the subject of that proposal needed to concern a specific area of geography that the group was addressing during a particular meeting. CCG members proceeded to make proposals and discuss options area by area, until the entire WTSA had been covered, at which point, the group was tasked with choosing among options generated during a period of plan-package proposals. Charged with reaching consensus decisions, discussions and proposals during the package proposal stage could touch on any subject, anywhere in the system. The final step was approval of the CCG’s package of
proposals, which then were forwarded to officials for formal action. Table 3.2 summarizes both the time-line and the structure of the CCG process.

**Parties to the Community Collaborative Group**

Design elements, such as the time-line and structure are important to understanding the CCG process, but they are not the process. The collaborative process, or any stakeholder engagement activity, is created and sustained, successfully or unsuccessfully, not by virtue of its design but by individuals and groups supporting or criticizing the process. During a long, complex, significant, and locally situated process, such as the CCG, parties affected by and capable of affecting the process are not likely to be stable, and even membership of the group can change. The CCG process was not an exception to changes either to the group’s audiences or to the group.

With respect to audiences, the number and intensity of individuals and groups that engaged with the CCG (for better or worse) experienced a tremendous growth curve across the years of planning and conducting the CCG. As the process unfolded, more and more people became aware of it and, hence, there were increasing numbers of attendees, public comments, newspaper letters to the editor, and other communication about the CCG and the issues involved. It already has been noted that, among CCG members and managers, the facilitator changed, but, in total, four members left the CCG during its life span (for different reasons); the convening agency’s point person on the process retired (just weeks before the CCG concluded); and among officials in city government who, ultimately, would adopt the CCG’s proposals (with or without changes), there was more than one change in group membership that had important implications for the CCG. The purpose of this section is not to detail such changes but to identify stable
Table 3.2

**Planned and Actual Phases of the West Trail Study Area Community Collaborative Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Estimated Duration</th>
<th>Actual Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public introduction and orientation</td>
<td>Public open house</td>
<td>July–September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convening</td>
<td>Select CCG members; define roles, responsibilities, ground rules, and requirements and constraints</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative learning</td>
<td>Consider issues identified in the situation analysis; understand current conditions for recreation, natural and cultural resources</td>
<td>November–December</td>
<td>November–January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning/DFC</td>
<td>Set general vision, a picture of the future; set specific, measurable desired future conditions; share with the broader public</td>
<td>January–February</td>
<td>January–March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option Generation and Scenario Building</td>
<td>Find broad areas of agreement; build specific planning options</td>
<td>March–June</td>
<td>April–May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Options</td>
<td>Board of trustees and public input received and incorporated</td>
<td>July–August</td>
<td>May–October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification and agreement</td>
<td>Feedback (from Evaluation) will inform consensus-based draft plan</td>
<td>September–October</td>
<td>November–January (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Board of trustees and city council decision making and approval</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>February–March (2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
categories of parties to the CCG, of which there were six: (a) CCG members/representatives, (b) a CCG facilitator, (c) staff from the convening agency managing the CCG, (d) the public, (e) government bodies and officials, and (f) staff from the convening agency supporting the CCG. Below, I define those categories, with the discussion divided into individuals and groups that were directly involved with making the CCG function, and those on the margins of the process, whom I call “indirect parties.”

**Direct parties.** Parties to the CCG defined as directly involved were those who had or could have an immediate influence on the progress of the process, and they included members/representatives seat on the CCG, the facilitator(s), and managing and support staff from the convening agency. As descriptive categories, there is little to say about these parties at the moment, other than that members/representatives were the people at the table who developed the plan; facilitators managed the group’s discussion and process; managers at the agency supervised the facilitator and worked with him (and then her) to design and manage the process; and support staff at the agency provided meeting setup and recording services. The CCG had seats for 16 members representing five stakeholder categories (see Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2. Community Collaborative Group stakeholder categories](image)

**Indirect parties.** Parties to the CCG defined as being involved indirectly were those who could affect the process only by causing direct parties to take some concrete actions. Not without (significant) influence on the process, indirect parties had no formal mechanism to cause
direct parties to the CCG to do one thing or another. Indirect parties included governing officials and the public. Inclusion of government bodies in this category may seem counterintuitive, but the structural relationship of OSMP to higher authorities leaves the department existing almost as an independent entity that, every so often, gets suggestions from those above it for actions that the agency may or may not adopt (unless those suggestions become part of the city code).

Hierarchically above the OSMP, there are two levels of Open Space governing bodies. The first level is the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT), whose five members are chosen for 3-year terms by the Boulder City Council (BCC), which is the second level. Officially, the OSBT is the BCC’s designated manager of OSMP, but on most questions, OSBT plays an advisory role to the agency, with the BCC being the authoritative voice. In fact, in a curious situation that will not be discussed further, department staff, not members of the OSBT, report to the BCC.

The indirect party of the public existed at several levels, presented here from the most general to the most specific. First, there is the population of the City of Boulder, whose residents all stand in some relations to the WTSA. Within that broad population, there is a subset of what many call the “Open Space community.” Undefined in the local discourse, the Open Space community is treated here as the imagined community (see B. Anderson, 2006) that shares an interest in Open Space and Mountain Parks, regardless of the specific interest of a particular individual or group. The Open Space community, however, cannot be confined to the City of Boulder, as people and groups invested in the program may or may not be residents of Boulder. Hence, in this report, the Open Space community is defined as anyone with an interest in the program, regardless of residency. The Open Space community also can be divided into discrete elements, such as individuals with a common concern and interest groups that promote a specific agenda. Importantly, as used in this report, the community is inclusive of direct parties to the
CCG, and members in one category can and did move into the other categories during the CCG (e.g., members of the public became members of the OSBT). The next several chapters detail how members of the Open Space community divided the community to define and redefine members of it as stakeholders, or as substantive members of the community, as well as the qualities of those categorized and identified as stakeholders of one type or another.

**Narrative Organization, Ethics, and Assessment**

In this section, the organization, foci, and approaches employed to reconstruct the CCG are discussed. I also address ethical issues of import to this report, and some evaluative criteria that guided the research.

**Telling *this* Story**

From the issues at stake, to the parties, to the enacted process, the CCG and Open Space governance are unique specimens, and their uniqueness is an essential part of understanding what transpired, and the meanings of stakeholder(s) that shaped what unfolded. Capturing and re-presenting even the minimal details demonstrating that uniqueness, it turned out, could not be accomplished readily, or summarily, as a “site description.” A meaningful sense of meanings of stakeholder(s) in the local context of the Open Space community, at the historical point in time when the CCG occurred, required a layered weaving of knowledge that sedimented into more and more complex scenarios that were informed by immediately preceding and short-term (weeks or months) and long-term (years and even decades) historical events. The following chapters proceed in such a manner; through the telling of the story of the CCG, contextual information necessary to understand events compounds as the narrative progresses. The narrative, however, is not descriptive but analytic in purpose.
The parts of the CCG’s story that are told are selective, and that selection occurred in-between the need to provide descriptive information and to demonstrate a conceptual point about stakeholder(s). For that reason, the narrative best is described as presenting interrelated moments/events during the CCG, and each part is analyzed at a relatively high level, speaking to a unique conceptual issue. In that case, organization of the conceptual focus is driven by events. There are, however, times when more than one event spoke to a conceptual matter at a particular time in the CCG’s life span, in which case, description was driven by an analytic agenda. Attention to concrete and conceptual ground gives the narrative an uneven movement between phenomena that were singular (during the CCG) and repeated.

Finally, changes in the generalizability (within the site) of evidence presented, as well as types of data available in which to ground those various claims, means that the analytic procedures employed adapt to conditions of the task at hand. When and where spoken discourse could be employed, it is default data, as it best represents (among available sources) what occurred. With transcripts, all manner of interpretive moves are possible, and extreme subtleties of communicative practice are noticeable across large datasets. Other interpretations in this report rely on coarse-gained data that was produced by others for nonresearch purposes (e.g., OSBT meeting minutes), and those are treated differently than author generated transcripts. In methodological texts, there is a great deal of differentiation between analytic practices, such as content analysis, DA, document analysis, and other “procedures.” However, discourse analysts conduct content analysis, document analysts analyze discourse, and content analysts engage in document analysis. Across the following chapters, I employ the analytic approaches that are best suited to making sense of events as they occurred in real time.
The fourth chapter of this dissertation, for example, proceeds without an analytic framework, working inductively to identify communication through which construction of local meanings of stakeholder(s) occurred as the CCG was planed and its members selected. The fifth chapter similarly works without a net to provide an orientation to the policy discourses (see Carbaugh, 2009; Chock, 1995; Hastings, 1998) of the community, and considers, in particular, how policy discourses at multiple levels were interpreted differently by different parties. The sixth chapter centers on group boundaries, and shows how terms, events, and people were interpreted and reinterpreted in various ways, with profound consequences by members of the collaborative group, the managing agency, the governing board, and the public. The seventh chapter foregrounds policy discussions, to demonstrate how, during deliberations, CCG members performed and assessed acts of representation, and the role of the issue under consideration in those representations. The eighth and final analytic chapter returns to an inductive stance, reflecting on how CCG members represented each other to each other and to the public, and how they sought to understand how their 2-year conversation would be used and represented in the future. In closing the current chapter, a few words are noted about ethics and assessment of the research and report.

The Ethics of this Story

Ethics in public sphere research in open societies are poorly developed, and in the realm of stakeholder governance, they are nonexistent. In the United States, citizens have First Amendment and other rights to observe, record, and otherwise monitor public meetings, such as those of the CCG. In contexts of traditional public spaces (e.g., the sidewalk) and public gatherings (e.g., city council meetings), there is no legal expectation of privacy, and research in
those contexts often focuses on the undifferentiated crowd, unknown individuals, and/or public officials. In those instances, the law is clear. Stakeholder governance, however, is different.

During this study, many ethical and related legal questions arose, such as whether the CCG was defined as a “public meeting,” which requires legal responsibilities for notice, reporting, and the like. Such issues cannot be addressed here, and, in practice, the CCG was treated by all parties as a public forum, and CCG members were treated as acting in an official capacity (both for the city and their constituents). Given those conditions, generally, I approached the CCG as public meeting events. Two issues—recordings of the CCG meetings, and naming CCG representatives in this report—however, were constant points of reflection during the study, suggesting that they deserve note.

Managers of the CCG sought to “keep the discussion at the table,” part of which meant that CCG members could not record CCG meetings. No prohibition of recording by the public was suggested, and my recording efforts and their purposes never were concealed. In fact, more than once, the presence of a recorder on the table, in one way or another, became a matter of CCG conversation. One time, the facilitator paused the CCG’s conversation to ask members if they protested the record being made. CCG members asked me questions about the purposes to which the recording would be put, but none expressed concerns.7 At another time, a CCG member misstated something, others reminded him that his speech was being recorded, and the member leaned into the microphone and jokingly attributed the misstated position to someone else. Neither of those instances constitutes “consent” in the traditional sense but, along with other such occurrences, there are several documented points during the CCG process where group members considered the recordings being made and did not express any opposition to them. Analysis of the CCG process gives me reason to question the logic of attempting or
desiring to “keep the conversation at the table,” but out of respect for that position during the CCG, I made no public release of the recordings, in whole or in part.

Questions about recordings bleed into issues of representation of parties to the process and their contributions—specifically, the matter of anonymity. Questions about where the line between private individual and public figure should and can be drawn during stakeholder processes are political decisions as much as ethical ones. People who participate in public stakeholder processes are not public officials; they are private individuals. However, during stakeholder processes, those private individuals participate under the assumption that they speak for public interests, not their personal interests, and that their discussions (ideally, should) have an influence on public policy. To a degree, participants in stakeholder governance surrender a right to claim anonymity by participating and, thereby, becoming quasipublic officials. Those issues raise a host of important concerns for stakeholder research not addressed in that literature. I will return to these subjects at the conclusion of this report; here, I explain only my rationale for using real names in this text.

Real names of individuals, groups, and places in this report are used for three principal reasons. First, parties to the CCG were operating in the public sphere, and CCG members were quasipublic officials. Second, the relational history of Open Space stakeholders is an important part of the analysis, and use of real names of people and organizations assists in understanding that history. Third, during conversations among CCG members, members used each other’s names, and the narrative simply flows better the less that quoted material is unnecessarily altered.

Those reasons do not necessarily justify the use of real names but two aspects of the study support the decision to do so. First, as noted above, the CCG was a public process, its
membership was publicly known, and documents listing the CCG’s membership readily are available. Among the top responses of a Google search for “Community Collaborative Group” and “Boulder, Colorado” is the final plan that the CCG approved, the second page which lists former CCG members and their stakeholder category in the CCG process (e.g., conservation, recreation, or neighbor). Along with details covered in this report, discovering who said words quoted in this report would not be difficult to deduce, at a level. Second, when soliciting requests for interviews with CCG members, each person was offered the option of masking his or her identity in this report. The messages (an initial and a follow up), specifically, requested a response concerning use of recipients’ name in the report, regardless of whether they would contribute interview data. All respondents consented to use of their proper names but, as described above, some former CCG members did not respond to those requests in any fashion.8

Finally, I take seriously the idea that qualitative research should and can constitute a dialogue between researchers, participants, and audiences (to the research). At its highest order, that dialogue requires all parties have access to relevant data used in analysis to ground interpretations. Of limited relevance to this report, itself, in the future, large sets of data collected during the research of the CCG—including long segments from the CCG transcript, recordings, and extensive documentation produced by the CCG—will be made publicly available. Much of those data names speakers, and any anonymity that might have been included in this report will be erased.

Evaluating this Story and Analysis

Standards for ethnographic research are debated intensely, both specific criteria proposals and the very idea that ethnography can have common standards. Review of those debates are beyond the scope of this report (see, e.g., Lecompte, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; W. J. Potter,
1996), but a summary provides background for this section. Bochner (2000) succinctly explained why debates about the subject of qualitative research evaluation criteria persists, writing that ethnographers

have never overcome our insecurities about our scientific stature. In our hearts, if not our minds, we know that the phenomena we study are messy, complicated, uncertain, and soft. Somewhere along the line, we became convinced that these qualities were signs of inferiority, which we should not expose. . . . so we hide behind the terminology of the academic language games we’ve learned to play, gaining some advantage by knowing when and how to say “validity,” ”reliability,” “grounded,” and the like. (p. 267)

There appears among ethnographers a tendency, at once, to want guides for their practices, a reluctance to accept those guides, and open criticism of the very idea of criteria. S. J. Tracy (2010) wrote an entire article following that format, opening by explaining that evaluative criteria are “shorthand about the core values of a certain craft,” proposing a typology of qualitative evaluative criteria, and concluding that “grasping too strongly to any list of rules . . . is an act of delusion, suffering, and pain” (pp. 838, 849). However, in the final analysis, Bochner (2000) wrote, when ethnographers discuss evaluative criteria, “what we are taking about always boil down to compliance with our own conventions” (p. 269), but the relevant question is: Whose conventions, and, perhaps more important, whose values are embodied in those conventions? In closing this chapter, moving from the most general to the most specific, I introduce some of “our own conventions” as they have been stated in the literature on qualitative research, ethnography, and DA. These standards are forwarded without much comment, but I return to them at the conclusion of the report.
The first issue to address is how to assess the general purpose of this study. Because qualitative researchers cannot only not agree on evaluative criteria but the practice of qualitative research actually works against standards (e.g., contextualized, local knowledge, and surprise), Flyvbjerg (2006) suggested that “validity” be discarded in favor of better arguments. Rationality and evidence would ground claims to truth, the value of which would be judged by the success of the argument in dialogue with other perspectives, with accuracy established by virtue of a claim/argument becoming central to a discourse and practice. The only internal controls of Flyverberg’s criteria are the argument and supporting evidence, but the other criteria are useful as longer term assessments of the influences of research on discourses and practices; that is, its practical and theoretical value.

At a more concrete level, S. J. Tracy (2010) summarized general principals of contemporary qualitative and ethnographic research, describing them as forming a “big tent” that would satisfy many perspectives (see also Lincoln, 1995). Eight qualities of quality qualitative research were included: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethical, and (h) meaningful coherence. Most of those categories are self-explanatory, but more words about a few are useful. Sincerity describes personal reflexivity and methodological transparency, resonance means the degree to which findings can be abstracted from the immediate context, and meaningful coherence means that the study has a solid research design that, extending Flyverbeg’s (2006) metaphor, would warrant arguments.

The standards described above are the most general conditions that could be applied to all qualitative research. Under that general framework, ethnography and DA have their peculiarities to account for, a few of which overlap, in the work discussed here. Silverman (1989) identified
six evaluative criteria from an ethnographic perspective, which can be paraphrased as: (a) critique passing as reasoned alternative, (b) taking the actors’ views as truth, (c) retreat to the unrepresentableness of the world, (d) choosing between paradigms, (e) reliance on single events, and (e) the absence of cultural forms. The first three criteria speak to what is represented in a study, with Silverman arguing that high-quality qualitative research offers more than does theoretical speculation, the unanalyzed comments of actors, and/or the claim that social phenomena are too messy to understand. The latter three criteria speak to how qualitative research represents its subject, with Silverman stating that good works will be in-between theoretical perspectives, make claims grounded in many (and sometimes contradicting) events, and always account for the cultural frame of actors and actions when making interpretations.

With the aim of guiding “those who are learning the trade,” and mitigating against “work that might lend credence to the quantitative researcher’s dismissal that, in discourse analysis, ‘anything goes’,” Antaki, Billig, Edwards, and Potter (2002, Well- and poorly-founded section, para. 1) described six analytic shortcomings of extant empirical discourse analysis. First, under analysis through summary summarizes talk and, thereby, erases the complexity that is the grist for DA. Second underanalysis through taking sides occurs when researchers simply pass moral judgment on speakers’ talk (e.g., sexist talk must be bad). Third, underanalysis through overquotation or isolate quotation happens when similar pieces of data are presented without exploring/analyzing them, as if their sheer numeric quantity supported a claim. Fourth, the circular discovery of discourses and mental constructs occurs when researchers take speakers’ statements (e.g., “I think” and “I feel”) as representations of their inner thoughts and feelings. Fifth, underanalysis through false survey generalizes beyond the reach of one’s data. Sixth,
underanalysis through spotting involves identification in data of regular features of speech (e.g., continuers, facework, and categorization) that are taken as interesting conclusions.

Without being ruled by the preceding texts, this study was guided by their insights. General and specific ideals about qualitative research, ethnography, and DA presented above were used to maintain focus during observations of the CCG, analysis of data, and composition of this report. However, in keeping with emerging traditions, I also violated and questioned those guides as I employed them. Broad assessment of this study’s degree of fit with those ideals must be deferred, but one quality should be stated at the beginning.

In approaching this study simultaneously from ethnographic and DA perspectives, the study fails ethnographic ideals to meet DA ideals, and it fails DA ideals to meet ethnographic ideals. To maintain the DA focus on meanings in talk and social discourses, ethnographic ideals are violated by the absence “think description” (see Geertz, 1973). To maintain ethnographic attention on situated communication events, DA ideals of close attention to details of talk are violated. I have, to the best of my ability, under conditions of the narrative and analysis, sought to distribute those violations across the text. It is, however, possible at any point in the narrative to deepen the textual analysis or to expand the cultural frame. This report takes a certain cut to dense data collection that can be sliced and rearranged in many ways. The narrative to which the report now turns is one arrangement.
Chapter 3 Notes

1 An emergent research design of stakeholder governance studies in situ is forwarded as a means of not inscribing predefined ideas on a process that, in the end, may look very different than what might be expected. Emergent research is not similar in meaning to “exploratory qualitative research,” or as a precursor to experimental and social-scientific survey research. Emergent research design is held as an ideal for what might be described as a “first cut” of such studies. The first cut of a case, but not all analysis of a case, should be emergent, because an emergent research study grapples with the situated complexities of the process(es) studied. Not all research foci and questions that arise during a first cut can be attended to in that first cut, although questions to which researchers later return in another study is not “emergent” in the sense that is used in this report.

2 The intersection of observations, recordings, and documents is an interesting subject that deserves a short discussion. Being physically present for almost all of the CCG and related public meetings was beneficial on several level, but as the group increasingly talked around maps, participants’ conversations occurred as if all listeners could see the maps, which they could not. That practice excluded the public from meaningful understanding of words that were spoken. During those conversations, it was not uncommon to hear statements such as, “Let’s move this over there, to avoid these things here, and to gain this over there.” As the speaker pointed to the map, those statements made sense to those who could see the map, but the audience usually was not among that number. Explicitly to provide more context for audiences, several alternatives to table-based maps were tried during the CCG; the group, however, always wanted to return to tangible objects that could be drawn on, colored, and annotated.

3 The Daily Camera letters to the editor blog was discontinued in February, 2012. At the time of this report (January, 2013), the archive still could be found at http://camera-letterstotheeditor.pmpblogs.com

4 Recordings obtained from OSMP were provided as public records. A request was made for recordings after the CCG had concluded. For a fee, they were provided to me; whether others would have had such access is not clear.

5 For discourse analysts and, perhaps, some ethnographers, transcription is a theoretically or analytically directed practice (see, e.g., Bird, 2005; Coates & Thornborrow, 1999; Edwards, 2001; Jaffee, 2007; Poland, 1995), such that responding to different questions or exploring different topics employs different types of transcription. The focus on meanings of categories-in-use across the life span of the CCG made unworkable interactional-level transcription that notes pauses, stops, and other practices of interaction that are common in DA transcripts. In the absence of those representations of vocal markers, it was necessary to employ punctuation in the transcript for clarity. At points in the analysis, longer interactive excerpts are presented, and any conventions of DA transcription (e.g., representations of overlapping speech) are noted at those points.

6 Media, had they been more attentive to the CCG process during the process, might have been included in the list of important parties to the CCG, but prior to the CCG’s proposals being
considered by governing bodies, media reports about the CCG virtually were absent from local discourses. Over the 24 months of planning and conducting the CCG, three articles were published that discussed the process, and I am aware of a media reporter attending only one regular CCG meeting. During the 4 weeks when the CCG’s final proposals were considered by governing bodies, local media ran at least six articles, all of them focused on policy conflicts.

No concern was expressed about recording CCG meetings when they were described as “for analysis of the process.” A CCG member asked about my uses of the recordings, and whether I was attending to policy or process. When I responded that I was interested in the process, what I was doing became much less interesting to the group. I am curious about how I might have responded had anyone offered serious protest to my recording of public meetings of the CCG, but, thankfully, that situation never presented itself.

CCG representatives from OSMP are a unique type of subject in this study in relation to consent. As people who were participating in the CCG as members of that organization, OSMP representatives were public actors but not independent actors. With respect to requests to interview OSMP representatives, individuals may not have been the persons to make such a decision, because those individuals occupied positions in which their responses could implicate the City of Boulder. Therefore, my request to interview OSMP staff first was approved through proper organizational channels. OSMP management agreed to the request, and those managers involved with the CCG process made themselves available. I was informed, however, that the principal representative for OSMP during the CCG declined to contribute interview data.
CHAPTER 4
CATEGORIZING STAKEHOLDER(S)

How and why participatory processes are designed, constituted, and populated in a particular way is a significant omission in the literature on such processes. No matter their specific focus, theoretical and practical articulations of participation tend to address participation processes as if they have no relation to the environments in which they are employed. All aspects of enacting participation, to some degree, are influenced by what the process allows, who can participate in it, and, importantly, who participates in designing the process. Furthermore, not only do successes and/or failures of a participation process depend, in part, on its structural features but its design and membership selection are shaped by realities on the ground before such a process is introduced. Many enacted participation processes, in fact, emerge in response to environmental factors. In short, if the ideals and/or enactments of participation are to be practical, in a strong sense of the word, both must take account of what happens before participation begins.

When the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) Community Collaborative Group (CCG) began formal meetings in October 2009, the process of creating the CCG had been occurring for a minimum of 6 months. April 2009 is the earliest possible moment at which to begin the story of the CCG, but, as discussed below (and in Chapter 1), a full accounting must consider the CCG within the then-4-year-old, systemwide Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) trail study area planning, which was tied to the Visitor Master Plan (VMP), the development of which began in 2001. This chapter focuses on events that occurred between April 2009 and October 2009,
making note of the longer term matters as they become relevant to discussions about planning the CCG. Throughout the 6 months of planning for the CCG, many aspects of the process were introduced and debated by OSMP staff, board members, and the public at large. No issue, however, was more important or contentious than who was a stakeholder and who would represent stakeholders as CCG members. From the first public meeting that considered the possibility of organizing the CCG, through the nearly 5-hour-long representative selection meeting, questions about who was a legitimate stakeholder, and, therefore, who could or should represent a given stakeholder interest, were pervasive during planning discussions. Additionally, questions were raised continuously about types of stakeholder categories to which concerned parties could claim to be “legitimate” members.

Focusing on talk during formal meetings among parties to the planning for the CCG, this chapter demonstrates how, contrary to most extant descriptions, stakeholders and membership in a “stakeholder group” are not objective qualities but contingent and contested processes of categorization that are grounded in local discourses. Tacking development of the CCG’s management and membership structure during Spring and Summer 2009, the chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first section discusses how parties to the planning meetings sought to define who was and was not a WTSA stakeholder, but also how those parties failed to adopt strict criteria that provided guidance for assessing claims to stakeholder status. The second section reflects on the parties’ efforts to name/categorize stakeholders with a legitimate claim to be formally represented in the CCG’s discussions. The third section examines how, during selection of stakeholder representatives to the CCG, the legitimacy of individuals’ claims to membership in a “stakeholder group” were actively and/or passively disputed.
Naming Stakeholders

Preparation for the CCG began in early 2009, with a “situation assessment” of the Open Space community that included a planning framework for the WTSA, identification of significant issues in the WTSA, and the potential for a successful community-based collaborative governance process (City of Boulder, 2009a). Conducted by a consultant hired by OSMP to design and facilitate the CCG, the assessment included private discussions with a “core group” of OSMP staff and “confidential interviews with community representatives” (City of Boulder, 2009b, p. 2). From the situation assessment emerged initial categories of WTSA stakeholders relevant to the CCG process that were not very contentious. However, as the months of CCG planning grew longer, it became clear that WTSA stakeholders were not as easily identified as originally thought.

This section examines how the number and definitions of WTSA stakeholders were communicatively constructed in Spring and Summer 2009 during meetings between the OSBT, OSMP staff, and the public. Analysis of those discussions shows how distinctions between different sectors of the Open Space community were divided first into the categories of decision makers and the general public. Decision makers and the general public both divide further, but, here, the public is foregrounded. During deliberations about plans for the structure of the CCG and CCG member selection, public stakeholders were identified principally as organized interests and unorganized interests, although a few other forms were mentioned.

Decision-making Stakeholders

Decision makers represents the first division of the Open Space community into stakeholder groups, and is a primary category in participation that is formal and complex. The distinction between decision makers and the general public is common because few participation
processes are endowed with decision-making authority; formal channels of government make binding decisions. As with other participation process, the CCG lacked decision-making authority, and during its planning, repeated reference was made by OSBT members to the fact that “the city [was] not advocating the decision making to the CCG” (Briggs, OSBT 4/22/09). Todd, the designer and first facilitator of the CCG, explained to the board that, “If the group comes up with a recommendation that meets all the filters and conditions, the board . . . would be likely to support the recommendations,” adding that “the board will not be bound” (Bryan, OSBT 4/22/09). Reiterating the point, a board member stated, “Anyone who cooperates with this CCG process will have to understand that there is a playing field, and there will be limitations” (Feinberg, OSBT 4/22/09).

Structurally, a categorical line always is present between decision-making stakeholders and community/public stakeholders, writ large, including members of a collaborative group. Decision makers as stakeholder, though, goes beyond structure to common symbols of decision makers, and to decision makers’ individual and collective relations with other stakeholders. As one member of the OSBT noted early in the planning process, “it is important to identify upfront what is important to the board” (Putnam, OSBT 4/22/09). During planning for the CCG, OSBT members made several comments that highlighted how they individually and collectively defined their interests as decision makers. A member of the board, for example, noted that “some of the community will not be represented in the CCG; the board’s responsibility is to represent the whole community” (Feinberg, OSBT 4/22/09).

A related interest of the OSBT was in not treating the CCG as “fake participation” (see Bryer, 2010). As a board member explained, “In the past, consensus recommendations have been disregarded or picked apart” (Briggs, OSBT 4/22/09). Another member concurred, saying,
“From sitting on a community board in the past, there was a strong feeling that the rug was pulled out from under . . . by the [Open Space] board” (Tauscher, OSBT 4/22/09). With regard to the ideal that the CCG should be meaningful participation, board members agreed, but they were uncertain about how meaningful participation would occur. Several months into planning for the CCG, an OSBT member explained that “there has not be any brainstorming on what the likely issues will be” (Billig, OSBT 7/8/09), and another raised the question, “How do you identify and attract into the process the appropriate stakeholders?” (Feinberg, OSBT 4/22/09).

Among board members, such concerns never were responded to directly, something (or the lack thereof) that may have influenced (or failed to influence) the course of the CCG process. There, however, is cause to question whether anyone would have listened had the OSBT defined its major interests in the process and how it conceptualized issues at stake in the WTSA and CCG.

As the proceeding chapters show, when the OSBT or its members did state how it (or its members) thought that the CCG was not promoting the board’s interests, board members’ feedback was not always followed. Making the OSBT’s interests known, and perhaps making those positions part of the structure of the CCG process, would have added important information about those decision-making stakeholders, which, when it came to WTSA policy questions, the CCG process would sideline and silence. By design, and with board support, the role of the OSBT during the CCG was to not interfere with the CCG. OSBT members retained a voice in managing the CCG from afar, however, and during the design phase, board members were instrumental in defining who, besides themselves and OSMP staff, were stakeholders. The latter categories are grouped below as “public stakeholders” to differentiate them from decision makers, but such divisions never are absolute. Roles, interests, and other symbols of stakeholder status can and do bleed over and change in practical participation.
Public Stakeholders

Public stakeholders come in many forms and can be categorized along many dimensions. As a first step in naming relevant stakeholders to the WTSA/CCG planning process, OSMP staff viewed geography as a the primary division between stakeholders and nonstakeholders. The topic of residency arose during planning for the CCG around the issue of who could serve on the CCG, but that issue speaks to general matters of who is and is not a stakeholder. Joe M., the WSTA Area Planner/Project Manager, told the board and public:

The department sees the advantage of having most of the CCG members as City of Boulder residents... Open Space has been voted on and paid for by city residents and, therefore, those residents have a greater stake in the sustainability of the land. (OSBT 7/8/09)

With the exception of a board member repeating Joe M.’s sentiment that limiting CCG membership to city residents might mean “good contributors will be eliminated from the process” (Mantione, OSBT 7/8/09), the matter was not discussed further. A decision was made to require the majority of CCG members to be residents of the City of Boulder, but nothing more was said about a general definition of WTSA (or Open Space) stakeholders during the planning stages. In fact, the question never was taken up directly by any significant party to the process (e.g., the CCG, OSMP, or OSBT). The absence of further discussion about who could be considered a WTSA stakeholder seemed to have little to no impact on the CCG, but failure to do so left the category open for anyone not only to define, but to define himself or herself into (or others out of). The practical impact can only be speculated, but a simple result could be individuals and groups seeking to engage the CCG process in ways that others may have thought suspect due to differences concerning perceptions of stakeholder status. Such contested claims
to stakeholder status did occur during the CCG planning, but at the level of stakeholder categories, not with regard to the category of stakeholders. The following section examines some of those differences in uses and meanings of stakeholder categories.

**Categorizing Public Stakeholder**

The previous sections of this chapter addressed divisions that differentiate stakeholders from nonstakeholders, and the primary types of decision-making stakeholders and public stakeholders. This section attends to symbolic dimensions of public stakeholders, or ways that stakeholder categories are identified, named, and defined in communication. Similar to other collaborative processes, the CCG’s public stakeholders first were defined in relation to existing organized interest groups. To those taken-for-granted parties, discussions among the OSBT added a category of “Unorganized Interests,” which no single organized group claimed to represent. The category of Unorganized Interests would morph into the category of “Neighbors,” which proved during the CCG to be the most contentious category of Open Space stakeholders, and is discussed in Chapter 6. Finally, during planning for the CCG, OSBT members stressed that nonhuman nature, as well as what shall be called the Open Space program, itself, were a stakeholders.

**Organized Interests**

When proposed in April 2009, a written description stated that the CCG would “engage a group of community members who will represent various recreational, cultural, and conservation interests . . . selected by the outdoor recreational, cultural, and conservation communities in Boulder” (City of Boulder, 2009a, p. 1). The important term in that statement is “communities,” defined in written documentation as “communities of interests.” Introducing the process to the OSBT, Todd expanded on the meaning of “communities,” saying that it included “organized
community groups and other community members not affiliated with those groups” (Bryan, OSBT 4/22/09). A first division of public stakeholders, then, was between those who were members of, or otherwise affiliated with, an organized interest, and those who were not.

Among audiences present for public CCG planning meetings in Spring 2009, there was no argument about whether organized interests should participate in the CCG, which might have been due to the fact that all of the speakers at the planning meetings were active members of interest groups. Tom, a member of the Flatirons Climbing Council (FCC), expressed concern about the CCG plan, but told the board that his “group would reluctantly support and contribute” (Isaacson, OSBT 4/22/09). A member of the environmental conservation group Friends of Boulder Open Space (FOBOS) explained that “FOBOS was committed to seeing this process through” (McDonald, OSBT 4/22/09). The Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance (BMA) also was spoken for, with a member noting that “we are looking forward to having a discussion” (Barrow, OSBT 4/22/09). Not one of these speakers placed his or her group outside the CCG; speakers assumed that their groups would have a seat at the table. Thus, in the CCG process, as in other cases, and in most stakeholder literature, the notion of a “stakeholder interest” or “community of interest” was equated with organized interest groups.

The degree to which stakeholders and organized interests were synonymous in the CCG became clearer as the planning progressed, and it was brought into relief when an OSBT member questioned how “Neighbors” would be involved in the process. “Neighborhood involvement,” she explained, “is the largest challenge, especially because they are not an organized group” (Feinberg, OSBT 4/22/09). Prior to that statement, there had been no mention of stakeholders whose interests, supposedly, were not represented by an organized interest. The naming of this
new category, along with emerging structures of CCG representative selection process, was interpreted as a direct threat to the historical role of interest groups in Open Space governance.

**Unorganized Interests**

In hindsight, “WTSA neighbors” seems like it would have been a base stakeholder category for the CCG process. Not only is every inch of the WTSA’s eastern boundary lined by residential housing, but “Neighbors” are the only group identified by name in OSMP’s guiding principles, as stated in the *VMP*. The *VMP* (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005) commits OSMP to the “Good Neighbor Policy,” through which the department seeks to “prevent or mitigate adverse visitor use impacts on adjacent private or public lands” (p. 30). “Neighbors,” however, was not named a stakeholder category until late in planning for the CCG; prior to that point, documents and presentations described what morphed into neighborhood stakeholders as at-large or unaffiliated people: “members of the public not aligned with the other represented interests” (City of Boulder, 2009a pp. 2–3).

In that last quote above, “aligned with other represented interests” means being a member of an interest group, or “user groups,” as they often are described in local discourse. A memo by OSMP staff to the OSBT was direct, stating that the CCG should include at the table “people not aligned with groups” (City of Boulder, 2009c, p. 1). That wording demonstrates, again, just how strongly stakeholder interests can be treated as equivalent to interest groups, with implications for participatory governance. Among both decision-making and public stakeholders, it was an unquestioned fact that groups/organizations, such as the FCC, FOBOS, and BMA, represented stakeholders’ interests on certain questions, and that those groups, not the interests that they claimed to represent, would have a seat at the CCG table. In mid-Summer 2009, however, plans for the selection process of CCG representatives began to take shape, the outlines of which
organized interests considered a threat to their potential participation at the CCG table, and, perhaps, to definitions of stakeholder interests as they had come to be defined by user groups.

Specifics of the CCG representative selection process are discussed below; in general, the process was designed such that “representatives [would be] selected for their ability to articulate the interests of a segment of the population that shares those interests” (Bryan, 2009, p. 9). When presented to the board and public in June 2009, the selection design was criticized primarily for ways in which it disrupted established ideas of “shared interests,” as defined by interest groups in the Open Space community. Protesting the proposed design in June, Tom, of the FCC, held that “user groups [should] pick their representatives to speak for them” (Issacson, OSBT 6/24/09). A member of BMA’s board of directors (and future CCG member) added that “Boulder has some great user groups, [and] this process seems to dismiss many of these groups” (McIntyre, OSBT 6/24/09). Another member of the public in attendance, who was aligned with the group Friends Interested in Dogs and Open Space (FIDOS), wanted to know “why [OSMP] staff is proposing to have an at-large representation . . . . If this approach is taken, the expertise of . . . groups will be lost” (McCabe, OSBT 6/24/09).

Those comments about user groups show quite clearly that interest group members expected representatives of their groups to be at the table during the CCG, an assumption that no one challenged. At least one OSBT member legitimated user group members assumptions about participation when she “clarified that the CCG will not be community at-large members only . . . others from user groups will also be included” (Tauscher, OSBT 6/24/09). Although that statement may have eased concerns of some interest group members about how their group would participate in the CCG (i.e., directly or indirectly), it did not completely close the debate.
Coming at the question of interest group participation from another direction, a member of FOBOS questioned if “there was a mechanism in place for keeping people who do not fully disclose involvement in an interest group from becoming a member of the unaligned/at-large community” (Neupert, OSBT 7/8/09). This inquiry treated people affiliated with an organized group as if their individual interests were exactly the same as groups of which they were members. Whether that alignment actually existed was irrelevant, as discussed later in this report. At this point in the CCG’s planning, the at-large/unaffiliated category still existed, with its members being defined by an amalgamation of interests, including matters relevant to adjacent neighbors, Open Space planning and governance, and broad issues of the community (Bryan, 2009).

During the last CCG planning meeting, just a week before the final plan for the CCG formally was introduced to the public, a member of OSBT expressed “reservations about combining at-large with the neighborhoods” (Putnam, OSBT 7/8/09), and he suggested that “Neighbors” be a distinct WTSA stakeholder category with seats at the CCG table. Another board member noted that “neighborhood issues will be big . . . [but that] there has not been any brainstorming on what the likely issues will be” (Billig, OSBT 7/8/09). Despite the absence of discussion by the board concerning the definition of neighborhood interests at stake, or a definition of who was a “Neighbor,” the CCG’s at-large/unaffiliated category was renamed “Neighbors” prior to the CCG’s public debut. The act of naming neighborhood stakeholders, but not naming their interests or issues, would have profound consequences as the CCG progressed.

Formally, “Neighbor” interests were presented to the public at the WTSA Open House (July 2009) as access, parking and traffic, waste and litter, and privacy, noise, and safety. The utility of cutting up neighborhood stakeholders in those ways were debated when representatives
were selected in September 2009, and those conversations are discussed later in this report (see Chapter 6). During planning for the CCG, the matter of who was a neighborhood stakeholder was based on geography, but when the public got a look at the neighborhood category at the open house, a participant “voiced concern . . . [that] the CCG membership should not exclude other neighborhoods that are farther away from OSMP lands” (City of Boulder, 2009d, p. 3). Suggesting the uncertainty about this particular category, OSMP staff told the questioner that “the definition of neighborhoods for CCG representatives will be developed” (City of Boulder, 2009d, p. 3). “Neighbor,” however, never was defined.

**Other Interests**

Thus far, (public) stakeholder categories have been discussed here in relatively traditional terms—as living people. Although, arguments have been made in the literature for treating some nonhuman elements as stakeholders, as well as future generations of humans as stakeholders, anything beyond existing people and groups still are considered to be far outside the mainstream of stakeholder thinking. That position was the case in the CCG as well, but a few comments made during the planning meetings suggest that if actual practices of stakeholder governance are examined, claims that there exist nonhuman stakeholders would be supported, and other categories would enter debates about general stakeholder qualities. In this section, I briefly note two non-human categories—the land and the program—that were identified as WTSA stakeholders in talk during planning for the CCG.

As a process for developing plans for public property, the CCG was awash in references to interests of the land and its nonhuman inhabitants. As early as the first planning meeting, OSMP staff had asserted that “natural resource protection considerations are a fundamental underpinning or foundation of the West TSA plan” (City of Boulder, 2009e, p. 2). As cited
previously, an OSMP staff member was quoted as defining an “Open Space stakeholder” as someone with “a greater stake in the sustainability of the land” (Mantione, OSBT 7/8/09). During the CCG, most participants supported the notion that all other stakeholder interests depended on the sustainability of the WTSA as a natural resource, but even conservation representatives often treated protection of the land as a means to other humancentric ends (e.g., bird watching and environmental education). During the planning stages, only one comment was made that described the natural environment as an independent stakeholder; that sentiment came from an OSBT member, who told OSMP staff that it was “important that CCG members know that the goal is to do what is best for the area” (Feinberg, 6/24/09).

Like the land itself, future generations also were regularly invoked during the CCG, but, again, often in ways that used them for rhetorical purposes, not as people with stakeholder status. Although unborn and underage humans were referenced regularly, people who existed in the past were mentioned only fleetingly, and only once were named stakeholders. A member of OSBT named the ghosts of Open Space as stakeholders, saying that it was important to provide “background information . . . to remind participants about the history and initial intent of the people who started the Open Space program” (Billig, OSBT 7/8/09). Interests of past generations are a questionable stakeholder category, but with respect to Open Space, a number of the people who established the program (i.e., those who worked for and voted on the Charter in 1967) remain members of the community today. Contemporary Open Space is not what it was 40 years ago when the program was started, and, in many respects, interests of those who began the program no longer are immediately relevant (e.g., the land now is protected). The endowment of past generations with stakeholder status may mean that when people think about stakeholder, it is not only the future that is considered, but the past can be reinterpreted as well.
Stakeholder Belonging

As discussed above, definitions of stakeholder categories often are grounded in identifiable interest groups. Under such conditions, who belongs to a stakeholder category is treated as an objective fact of membership in an organized interest, meaning that the question of who represents stakeholder interests is somewhat predetermined. If stakeholders are equated with interest groups, the pool of potential representatives is limited to the membership of organized interests, and, in practice, it probably is restricted further to individuals in positions of relative importance within a given interest group (e.g., members of governing boards). To a degree, the design of the CCG representative selection process challenged the idea that interest groups are the same as stakeholder categories, and that members of user groups were the best representatives of stakeholder interests.

As proposed, but placing within the conceptual language of this report, the design for the CCG representative selection process attempted to create space between the membership of interest groups and meanings of stakeholder categories by employing a new symbol of collectivity: “the caucus.” Ideally, anyone who identified with a caucus’s primary symbol (e.g., “conservation” or “recreation”) was a member of that caucus, and, thereby, had a role in giving meaning to the symbol, and in selecting and informing the caucus’s CCG representative(s). In practice, of course, there were limitations to cross-caucus membership, which was one of the reasons that the selection process led to mixed results. In this section, I reflect on how successful the caucus process was at disrupting Open Space community members’ established notions of stakeholder categories based on interest group affiliations, and the impact of the caucus process on stakeholder representative selection. First, however, I offer a glance into how the caucuses
were discussed by the community during the CCG planning stages, and the final design of the selection process.

**Gathering and Labeling Stakeholders**

The process of selecting WTSA stakeholders for the CCG process was called by Todd a “Communities of Interest Caucus.” Similar to how stakeholder is defined in this report, Todd introduced the caucuses as groups “made up of people who share a common interest in an activity or concern,” adding that the role of the CCG members would be to “represent the interest of the caucuses and be responsive to the caucuses . . . and to strive to represent all the interests expressed by members of the caucuses” (Bryan, OSBT 7/8/09). To confine the caucuses to CCG member selection, however, obscures how the process troubled categories of the Open Space community, creating the potential and context for redefinition of the community’s shared and divergent interests.

Ideally, caucuses were not just a means of democratizing CCG member selection but of recategorizing stakeholders in such a way that relations between stakeholders were not defined by interest group affiliations and past experiences between those groups. Such an approach, however, necessarily repositions interest groups and their members in the governing network, and, therefore, threatened the abilities of those groups to influence CCG outcomes. Members of organized interests responded swiftly and negatively to the proposal, as suggested by their responses to the question of at-large membership discussed above. Here, it is enough to mention that a BMA member told the OSBT that “there is a lot of expertise within these user groups that should be utilized” (McIntyre, OSBT 7/8/09), and the FCC member quoted above explained that “each of the . . . communities are unique and have individual histories with OSMP and each other” (Issacons, OSBT 7/8/09).
A great deal of foot stomping followed the OSBT’s approval of the caucus selection process, and although the board supported the public selection of CCG members, it rejected the organization of Open Space stakeholder into caucuses. OSMP staff and Todd heard that the board “support the concept of a CCG member selection process in which the community selects the CCG representatives,” and that OSBT “did not support a requirement that ongoing advisory groups [i.e., caucus] be formed to work with each set of community interests represented and the CCG” (City of Boulder, 2009b, p. 7). In the end, “caucus” meant little more than a long and difficult night in September 2009 when Open Space stakeholders gathered and selected CCG representatives.

When participants in the CCG caucus meeting arrived for the event, they gathered in a line. As they progressed forward in line, they passed a sign that read, “Please register for the caucus you would like to attend.” Registering, however, was about more than keeping track of who attended; it was about categorizing participants in a very public way.

Attendees entered the building where the caucus meeting was held single file. Inside, the line split into four lines, each leading to a table and OSMP staff members over whose head hung a banner stating the name of a caucus (see Figure 4.1). On the tables were several items: a program for the evening, name tags, markers, and a clipboard holding sign-in sheets. Printed at the top of each sign-in sheet was the name of the caucus that people who signed that sheet were registering to attend. Once people signed in, the OSMP staff member at the table gave them a color-coded name tag to identify attendees as participants of a particular caucus. Perhaps more importantly, the label identified participants as not being participants in any other caucus.
The system for sorting participants into caucuses and graphically labeling them as participants in a single caucus stemmed from the ground rules of that meeting. Eight rules had been established and were printed on the evening’s program/agenda. The important rules for present purposes were that: (a) “Participants must select and stay with the Caucus that best represents their primary interest” as those interests were categorized (e.g., conservation, recreation, cultural, or neighborhoods); and (b) “Attendees will respect the integrity of the Caucus process and will not attempt to subvert or undermine the caucuses” (City of Boulder, 2009f). Over the course of the evening, many people claimed that the second rule had been violated by some participants who were masquerading in caucuses where they did not belong; a violation of the first rule according to some.

**Blocking Entry to Belonging**

The largest and, arguably, most excited people at the caucus meeting were members of the Recreation Caucus (see Figure 4.2). This caucus was allocated five seats at the CCG table, and almost all of the stakeholder interests fitting under the category of “recreation” had established advocacy groups. Because caucus participants could subdivide themselves, the Recreation Caucus did just that, dividing into dogs, bikes, hiking, climbing, and running, the last
of which, during the CCG, also became the home for stakeholders concerned about horses. These were logical categories that, with the exception of horses, did a good job of covering the principal recreation interests at stake in the WTSA.

However, Recreation Caucus participants, or, more specifically, members of recreation interest groups, had a tacit agreement that the caucus’s seats would be allocated to members of the respective organized interests (see Chapter 7). Hence, the selected representative for biking was a member of BMA; the dog representative was a member of FIDOS; the climbing representative was a FCC member; and the runner (and horse) representative was a member of Boulder Trail Runners. The representative for hikers was the only recreation representative not selected prior to the caucuses, and that occurred because hikers had no standing user group. The person who took the uncontested CCG representative seat for hikers had come to the caucus meeting seeking to represent runners. How the recreation representatives were selected raises a question of whether the integrity of the caucus process was respected.

*Figure 4.2. The Recreation Caucus (September 2009). Source: Author.*

In the absence of the agreement among recreation groups, the experience, knowledge, and commitments of individuals chosen as CCG members for recreation seats likely would have resulted in their (or similar individuals’ from their organized interests) selection. As in other
spheres, though, the process matters as much, if not more, than does the outcome. No one challenged a selected recreation representative’s legitimacy to serve on the CCG but by making agreements about representation outside the caucus process, organized interests ensured that anyone not affiliated with an organized interest would not be selected as a Recreation Representative. Furthermore, unaffiliated people could neither make the case for their participation as a representative, nor have a real voice in who was selected as representatives.

As discussed below, the Conservation Caucus went to great lengths to silence people in the room who some participants believed did not belong in the Conservation Caucus, but because their representatives had not been predetermined, those “outsiders” had the opportunity to bring in different voices/perspectives, and (theoretically) had the potential to impact who was selected. Selection of the Recreation Caucus allowed for neither voice nor influence of alternative perspectives (i.e., those of unorganized recreation interests), and, therefore, exiting ideals and assumptions about recreation interests, and who best spoke to/for those interests, were not questioned by the very people the process was designed to engage in such conversations: all stakeholders, not just those affiliated with interest groups, whose interests are not always those of stakeholders, writ large, identifying with an interest.

**Excluding Belonging Within**

The ideal of the discretely defined stakeholder was a powerful force in the meetings of the caucuses. For example, when I attended the Conservation Caucus wearing a blue name tag that identified me as a participant in the Neighborhood Caucus, my right to be in the room as an observer was challenged by an OSMP staff member. Although a potential issue in all of the caucuses, an individual’s right to participate in a caucus was challenged only in the conservation meeting.
The Conservation Caucus meeting proceeded as follows. First, those gathered (see Figure 4.3) discussed whether to divide into subgroups (e.g., ecosystem integrity, trail sustainability, and nature hiking), which they decided not to do, remaining, instead, as one undifferentiated category. Second, the 11 candidates for the 5 CCG Conservation Representatives seats made a statement about their backgrounds and interest in participating as a conservation representative. Third, a set of questions was solicited from attendees, to which candidates responded. Finally, participants voted to select representatives.

I did not spend much time in the meeting of the Conservation Caucus. However, a recording device left in the room, captured almost all of the discussion. The first audible words on the recording were the caucus’s facilitator explaining that it was not necessary, at that time, to decide whether the people in the room “represented legitimate conservation interests” (unnamed, CCG Caucus 9/15/09). Two people in the room who were standing as potential representatives in the Conservation Caucus had relations with the Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance (BMA), an affiliation that others believed defined those individuals’ interests outside of, and even in opposition to, interests of natural resource conservation. Below, I tell a story about one of those two people, showing how his claim to represent “legitimate conservation interests” was challenged by others in the caucus, by OSMP staff, and by Todd.

Adam began his introduction to the group by noting his previous participation in OSMP planning, during which he “represented the mountain bike community,” which meant, at those times, he was speaking on behalf of BMA, of which he was a former board member. Additionally, Adam mentioned his history as a science teacher, and his current work as a bird monitor for OSMP and for the Boulder County Naturalist Association (BCNA). “My primary conservation issue,” he explained, “is the dog issue.” After finishing his introduction, someone
immediately asked, with respect to the dog issue, “Which side are you on?” Adam’s response was uncommitted, saying that the CCG process should inform his position, but he alluded to a disposition weighted against dog use of Open Space, saying, “We spent a tremendous amount of time trying to minimize impacts to vegetation with various rules. I don’t think it’s really working very well” (CCG Caucuses 9/15/09). After Adam spoke, introductions continued, and uneventfully moved into questioning, which was equally benign. Then came the vote.

Figure 4.3. The Conservation Caucus (September 2009). Source: Author

As people in the room gathered themselves to cast ballots, Dean, an OSMP staff member and CCG manager, introduced in Chapter 4, entered with a warning; noting that if he was not heeded, “we might just scrap the whole process” (CCG Caucuses 9/15/09). Dean told participants: “This is a conservation group. What we really want is resource conservation interests represented here, and legitimate conservation folks to hold these seats” (CCG Caucuses 9/15/09). Although Adam’s previous connections to the BMA did not help his case with other participants in the Conservation Caucus, it was BMA’s recruitment of candidates for conservation seats (and neighborhood seats, as discussed in Chapter 6) that brought attention to Adam and to the legitimacy of the interpretation of “conservation” that he brought to the table. In a side conversation, Todd told Adam as much, explaining that, “You’re disagreeing with the
way a lot of these people define ‘conservationist.’ What are your credentials?” (CCG Caucuses 9/15/09).

The conversation from which that last quote was taken, the recording of which is not always clear due to a busy room, could have been approached better by Todd, who began by accusing Adam of “infiltrating” the conservation group. Both Todd and Dean, however, were reacting to forces outside themselves; namely, the people in the room who did not want their meaning of “conservationist” questioned. That became dramatically clear when the first ballot produced three representatives, but left two seats and an alternate position without the required two-thirds majority. Todd surveyed the options: take the top three and vote the remainder; revote all; or, reject the two-thirds vote rule and accept the outcomes of the first vote as final. Of primary importance was that the minority position on the question of process be respected. As Todd explained, “I’ve done this in every group. In the recreation group, I stood up to the minority and got a lot of grief for it.” Someone in the room asked, “Who are you defining as the minority in our group?” Excerpt 4.1 picks up with Todd’s response.

Excerpt 4.1. Why don’t you call me that (CCG caucus meeting 9/15/09)

Todd I need to respect the minority. If you all were comfortable doing it [selecting representatives] by the next three people on the list, than that’s fine. But there’s two people that don’t want to do that

Unkn But they’re mountain bike, but they’re mountain bike persons

Adam Oh my God! They’re mountain bikers. Yes, but I’m a birdwatcher for BCNA. Why don’t you call me that!?

Although the Conservation Caucus allowed for the type of conversation among stakeholders that was denied by the Recreation Caucus, most participants in the meeting were not interested in talking about the meaning of “conservation,” or about qualities of those who would represent that category during the CCG. For all intents and purposes, participants in Conservation Caucus unintentionally allowed people into the room who might challenge their.
received opinions and spokespersons. Many Conservation Caucus participants would have preferred to exclude from the Conservation Caucus those challenging received opinions and representatives of “conservation” stakeholders. When expulsion failed, attempts were made to silence and to invalidate alternative interpretations of “conservationist.” As with the Recreation Caucus, it is doubtful whether any actions at all were necessary for the majority of those in the Conservation Caucus to select representatives who would speak to conservation interests from a position with which they identified.

The first round of voting led to the naming of three participants with deep ties to organized conservation groups. The second round, through which the last two seats were filled, resulted in similar outcomes. Interest group memberships of the selected CCG Conservation Representative was a who’s who of local environmental groups, and included: PLAN-Boulder County, which bills itself as “the leading citizens’ organization working to ensure environmental sustainability in the City of Boulder” (PLAN-Boulder County, n.d., para. 1); FOBOS; the Indian Peaks Chapter of the Sierra Club; the BCNA; and the Colorado Mountain Club. Few of these organizations would hold that its purpose only is conservation, but preservation is foregrounded in their perspectives. Locally, PLAN-Boulder and FOBOS are viewed as powerful figures in city politics and governance.

**Conclusion**

Naming, identifying, and/or categorizing “stakeholders” is one of the most important parts of designing and enacting formal and complex processes of participation, second only to selecting representatives of those categories (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). The literature on public participation, however, generally assumes that the categories relevant to participation are objective labels that describe stakeholders’ interests and/or identities. This chapter has shown
that although relevant stakeholder categories can be identified through objectifying means (e.g., structural divisions, organized interests, and/or stakeholder mapping), determining who is and is not a member of categories named is a complex, interactive, and political process. Meanings of categories and, therefore, membership in categories is contested, and those different meanings and memberships need to be negotiated. Those negotiations are not one-time affairs but such discussions will be most significant prior to beginning a process of participation, when the question of who will represent those categories is determined.

Before selecting representatives, stakeholder categories have little, if any, shared meaning among people identifying with a given category. After the selection of representatives, relevant categories, principally, but not exclusively, are defined by who holds a seat at the table. There is a moment in-between the naming of stakeholder categories that are necessary to include at the table and the selection of representatives, during which the categories represented can be defined and redefined by all affected parties. In some ways, the possibilities for such conversations were the purpose of the CCG caucus meeting as first proposed. Whether that plan was scrapped because of its complexity, pressure of organized interests, or for other reasons is an important question, but one that cannot be addressed here. Days after the OSBT meeting in October, the CCG was hastily gathered to begin its work, to which the next chapter turns.
Chapter 4 Notes

Management of environmental dimensions of Open Space and Mountain Parks were guided by the Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan (GEMP), and the Forest Ecosystem Management Plan (FEMP).

Preparatory work for WTSA Plan, and the public participation component of it, began in earnest in 2008. At that time, OSMP began conducting inventories of resources in the WTSA, and describing possible public participation structures. OSMP’s first public document on the WTSA planning process proposed a traditional top-down policy development and public participation process (e.g., review and comment). The concept that became the CCG first was referenced in public discussion in April 2009.
CHAPTER 5

STAKEHOLDER(S) DIS/IDENTIFICATION

Who (or what) a “stakeholder” is, and of what type, are not, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, objective matters that can be discerned through attributes such as interest group membership. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 6, geography is not an appropriate means of identifying stakeholders. Stakeholders are named and defined in categorization that occurs in irreducibly complex ways, and the use and interpretation of relevant categories is continually contested. In addition to accounting for how conditions on the ground influence participation structures and participants, participation, in theory and practice, must account for discourses in which relevant categories are made meaningful through communication. To date, however, there has been limited effort directed towards understanding intersecting discourses in which self and others are understood before, during, and after a process of stakeholder participation. Reference sometimes is made in the literature to relevant policy discourses, but investigations and enactments of participation, so far, have failed to account for—or even to identify—the many other relevant discourses that facilitate and constrain such processes. With respect to improving ideals and enactments of participation, the omission of knowledge and experiences that take account of discourses leaves much participation scholarship and processes without the means of being grounded in local situations and/or the ability to scale up.

During planning for the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) Community Collaborative Group (CCG), various interpretations of relevant discourses were performed but not discussed. Parties to the planning discussions expressed how they understood stakeholder categories, but
they did not seek to understand why people had different interpretations of the same categories. Structurally, interrogation of discourses that provided meaning to WTSA stakeholder categories was the general intention of the CCG’s first months, a phase that was formally described as “collaborative learning.” Evidencing in practice that understanding of participation processes must account for what proceeds participation, the CCG began with a struggle about responsibility for perceived violations of the meanings of categories during the CCG Caucus Meeting, setting the stage for later conflicts over “correct” interpretations of policy discourses, which then spilled over into discourses of the CCG process. At each step along the way, opportunities to broaden the discussion beyond the immediate problem faced by CCG members were missed, leading to reification of boundaries between “us” and “them” that were entirely symbolic. Generally speaking, CCG members, as well as the staff of Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP), and the CCG’s facilitator, sought to explain their interpretations of relevant discourses to others, without allowing their interpretations to be influenced by others’ interpretations. In the end, it is difficult to argue that the conversations during the CCG’s first months were ideally collaborative or that they resulted in learning across relevant discourses, limitations that would hobble the process as it progressed into its deliberative phases.

This chapter tells the story of the CCG’s early months, examining how CCG members (see Table 5.1) interpreted in different ways a “shared” discourse of “balance.” The discourse of balance threaded through the CCG’s discussions as members sought to acquire common understanding of CCG representatives’ personal backgrounds, policy issues and plans informing the CCG, and CCG process rules. The chapter begins with the group’s first meeting, known as the Kickoff and Orientation, in October 2009, and reflects on how CCG members located themselves and other members in relation to the discourse of balance. The second section
examines discourses of governance, or the rules and processes within which the CCG operated, showing how that discourse was variously understood by CCG members and by OSMP staff who managed the process. The third section considers discourses of the CCG process; that is, guidelines for participating in the CCG.

Table 5.1

Formal Representatives of the Community Collaborative Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreation</th>
<th>Conservation</th>
<th>Neighbors</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>OSMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael (Dogs)</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Guy (South)</td>
<td>Chuck</td>
<td>Joe R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark M. (Climbers)</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Ned (North)</td>
<td>Charlie*</td>
<td>Whit*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark O. (Bikes)</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Shelly (Central)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannes (Hiking)</td>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>Art (Central)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter (Runners)</td>
<td>Gwen</td>
<td>Scott (South)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Community Collaborative Group (CCG) members selected at the CCG Caucus Meeting who resigned their seats at some point during the CCG process. Charlie resigned in April 2010; Whit quit OSMP in June 2010; and Art and Scott resigned in June 2010.

Discourses of Stakeholder Selves

The CCG convened for its “kickoff and orientation meeting” (hereafter, kickoff meeting) in late October 2009. Introduction of CCG members to each other and to the core planning team of the Open Space and Mountain Park (OSMP) staff was the first item on the agenda. Todd described those statements (it was not a discussion) as trying to “get at people’s backgrounds, and who you are, and how you got here . . . to find out what’s really motivating you to be here,” and why participants were “willing to make a commitment of 12 months of this potentially painful—hopefully not—process” (CCG 10/15/09). Drawing on those introductory statements, the following sections introduce the CCG stakeholder representatives (hereafter, CCG representatives or CCG members) selected at the caucus meeting, noting similarities and differences in how they described themselves as stakeholders and the interests of themselves as
public stakeholders (e.g., identifying with multiple categories) and as stakeholder representatives (e.g., identifying with a single category).

Because speaker took slightly different approaches to the introduction, one-to-one comparison is not possible. Across all of the introductions, however, two themes emerged: (a) almost all of the CCG representatives cited natural resource protection activities as a central part of their personal stories, and (b) almost all of the representatives categorized themselves as being members of WTSA/Open Space stakeholder categories outside the one that they were formally selected to represent (in addition to everyone’s interest in conservation).

**The Common Thread of Protection**

Of the 15 CCG members who attended the kickoff meeting, 13 referred in their introduction to previous involvement with natural resource protection or conservation groups and/or activities, although how those references were made varied from members of one caucus to the next. Conservation Caucus representatives, for example, were least likely to say in specific words that they had an interest in natural resource protection. Ray, Beverly, James, and Karen all made reference to conservation interest groups with which they were involved previously, or were members of at that moment, but none of them said anything about how they came to be attentive to environmental issues. Karen, however, did note that she had “first became involved in Open Space issues in the 1970s as a biology teacher” (CCG 10/15/09), and Beverly explained that before retiring, she had been a corporate environmental lawyer. Only Gwen alluded to a personal history with conservation when she said, “My love for this land and this community has been consistently strong since the 1970s” (CCG 10/15/09).

In contrast to the conservation representatives, Recreation Caucus members were eager to share stories of their environmental work. Mark O., for instance, told the group how he
first became interested in the outdoors about half my life ago, when I spent a summer being a river guide in Moab [Utah], and got to learn about taking care of the river . . . and teaching responsible recreation. (CCG 10/15/09)

Mark M. explained that “I consider myself an environmentalist; my first environmental group I joined was in the 7th grade, and it was the Sierra Club” (CCG 10/15/09). Johannes recounted how he grew up in Seattle, and that his “parents took me hiking every single weekend, no matter whether it rained or not. It usually rained, so early on, I learned to love the mountains” (CCG 10/15/09). Peter, a native of Boulder, said that he had “a strong sense that the environment is important . . . [and] visiting Open Space has been very, very important to me for the restoration of my emotional, physical, and spiritual self” (CCG 10/15/09).

The reason for recreation representatives’ desire to put all this information about their conservation bona fides on the table may have been related to something that Michael mentioned during the introductions. After a long preface about why “there had been such acrimony” in the Open Space community, Michael noted, “You know, I’ve never had my sort of predilection for the environment questioned anywhere other than Boulder” (CCG 10/15/09).

Conserving Recreation

Prior to the CCG, in local Boulder discourses, the meaning of the category “recreation” had come to be defined such that those claiming it were pushed to the margin’s of membership in the category of “conservation,” or ejected completely. Policing of that particular boundary of Open Space stakeholder categories is important because, as noted in the previous chapter, the foundation of Open Space planning is natural resource protection. If preservation is assumed not to be any individual or group’s first priority, their stakeholder status would be questionable, and they would be perceived as being somewhat distant from the community as a whole (i.e., less of
a stakeholder). The problem with that position, however, is that, with a few radical exceptions, all members of the Open Space community are outdoor recreationalists. Moreover, the Conservation Caucus’s charge was to represent stakeholder interests in quiet hiking, bird watching, and trail sustainability, each of which, either directly or indirectly, is a recreational activity or resource.

Although all of the conservation representatives were recreation stakeholders, only two made explicit reference in their introductions to personal uses of Open Space in recreational terms. James talked at length about being “very much involved in hiking . . . and [had] become very familiar with the area, including Mountain Parks” (CCG 10/15/09). Beverly mentioned some recreational pursuits, explaining that she was “an avid backpacker, hiker, and climber; I’m not that great a rock climber but enthusiastic” (CCG 10/15/09). Ray, although never speaking of recreation, was not only a hiker—“director of the mountain school for a couple of years” (CCG 10/15/09)—but also a cyclist. For her part, Karen was a bird watcher, and Charlie, who was representing cultural conservation, disclosed at the kickoff meeting that he was “a regular user of Open Space—the owner of three dogs, and they keep me in line when I can get out with them” (CCG 10/15/09).

Summarizing those expressions, and echoing Michael’s statement above, Gwen noted in her introduction that recent planning processes had demonstrated to her that Open Space stakeholders “were not that different [or] that much opposed to each other” (CCG 10/15/09). As illustrated in the following section, although Gwen’s statement was conceptually accurate, relations looked much different in practice, in part, because different stakeholders understood common ideals differently in light of different discourse of recreation and conservation with which they communicatively identified. That CCG members had those different identifications
with the discourse came to the fore during the second portion of the kickoff meeting, when members talked about their “hopes, needs and commitments” for the CCG.

**The Valance of “Balance”**

Following introductions at the kickoff meeting, CCG members engaged in a conversation about what Todd called “hopes, needs, and commitments” (HNC). The exercise, as he explained it, sought to surface members’ “hopes for the process in terms of what do people need to make the process a success, and what commitments are CCG members make to make the process of success.” The HNC conversation started positively, with CCG members forwarding relational ideals that might foster consensus decisions in-between their various stakeholder interests and identities. Talk, however, quickly turned to recent events (i.e., the caucus meeting), and back into binary recreation–conservation discourses. The first two sections below describe how CCG representatives’ talk about their hopes, needs, and commitments related in different ways to a discourse of “balance” of interests in Open Space use and management, and how different understandings of balance (e.g., good or bad) influenced interaction among CCG members.

The HNC cited most frequently by CCG members concerned the questions that Michael had posed, “Why this [planning and use of Open Space] has become such a contentious issue in Boulder? Why these last few years there has been such acrimony?” (CCG 10/15/09). To address those questions, and to make the CCG successful, Michael asked everyone to “try to walk in somebody else’s shoes; see it from their point of view” (CCG 10/15/09). Peter said that he hoped “we can break down the ‘paradigm of separation’ in the community” (CCG 10/15/09), and Whit, speaking for OSMP, similarly said, “I hope we can kind of break down those stereotypes and realize that not everybody is black and white” (CCG 10/15/09). Finally, Charlie explained that
most of us wear a lot of different hats at the same time, and I think a lot of those hats have issues with each other. . . . I hope we keep that in mind so that we don’t get entrenched in a certain issue or position. (CCG 10/15/09)

Such statements identify with a discourse of balance that permeates some ideals of park management were not forthcoming from Conservation Caucus members. Parties identifying with discourses of balance tend to favor people having greater access to public lands, whether for recreation or commercial use, and, thereby, those discourses can be understood as threats to conservation ideals. CCG Conservation Caucus members may have dis-identified with discourses of balance for that reason, for other reasons related to local histories, or something altogether different. In any case, balance was not a term that Conservation Caucus members used to describe their HNCs.

One exchange, in particular, drew out difficulties associated with the question of balance. Ray made a statement that challenged both the paradigm of balance and others’ identification with discourses of protection under the ideal of balance:

I need out of the process and other people here is [sic] a commitment to look seriously at the resource that we all, supposedly, want to conserve as a first priority in this process. Starting off with our desires for how the restrictions should be set up or what our recreational needs are before we’ve actually looked at the natural ecosystems that we, supposedly, all want to preserve in perpetuity, this kind of is getting the cart before the horse. (CCG 10/15/09)

Mark M. responded with a “commitment . . . that kinda turns Ray’s on its head” (CCG 10/15/09). Mark invoked a common theme in discourse of balance: the necessity of park access to the economic and political will of publics for continued protection of parks. As Mark said:
The need I have is for us to acknowledge the connection to Open Space by the citizens of Boulder, and that connection links to their willingness to continue to spend money and tax dollars that they vote for—tax themselves to acquire and maintain Open Space—and without that connection, then, eventually, someday, the money goes away and, with it, the “in perpetuity” aspect of our aspirations also goes away. (CCG 10/15/09)

Both discourses that Ray and Mark noted, and tensions between ideals and realities embedded in/created by those discourses, as evidenced in the previous chapter, were not new to the Open Space community. Events at the caucus meeting, however, had thrown differences into relief. Potentially a positive development that could disrupt ideals of mutually exclusive stakeholder categories, in the immediate context, it mostly reified existing divides. Importantly, for some in the Conservation Caucus, challenges to the prevailing “paradigm of separation” were taken personally.

Early in the HNC discussion, Beverly brought events at the caucus meeting to the group’s attention, saying:

I’m going to talk about it, because nobody else is. I am still upset and concerned about the actions of the mountain bike association for sending people into caucuses that they didn’t belong in. I would hope that they would take responsibility for that. (CCG 10/15/09)

Scott described Beverly’s statement as acknowledging “the elephant standing in the room that we’re all peering over, under, and around” (CCG 10/15/09). However, like another pachyderm metaphor, CCG members were somewhat blinded to all events that occurred at the caucus meeting. During the conversation that followed Beverly’s request, there was little agreement about what had occurred at the caucus meeting and why, who was and could be held responsible,
and even the parties to which Beverly’s request was (indirectly) posed. Each CCG member was touching parts of the elephant and declaring what did or did not happen at the caucus meeting, generating confusion.

Scott, for instance, was quick to respond to Beverly, saying, “I regret being involved in that process” (CCG 10/15/09). That statement led Beverly to attempt to clarify herself, saying, “What I’m asking for is someone from that group to admit responsibility for that and apologize” (CCG 10/15/09). “That group” was the Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance (BMA). Michael, not a member of BMA, attempted to address problems that he perceived with “the whole concept of neighborhood representatives” (CCG 10/15/09), but he was interrupted by Beverly saying, “I’m not talking about that; I’m talking about the Conservation Caucus” (CCG 10/15/09).

Because the Conservation Caucus had selected CCG representatives accepted by those identifying with existing discourses of conservation in Boulder, events reported in the previous chapter about that meeting were not widely known by the community or by CCG members. The Neighborhood Caucus, particularly the south area group, was discussed by the OSBT and the community, and even Scott, at the center of that related controversy, was “not well aware of the Conservation Caucus or what’s happened” (CCG 10/15/09). Had the Conservation Caucus resulted in CCG conservation representatives who favored mountain biking in the WTSA, there most certainly would have been a similar public discussion about those events (Chapter 6 discusses the Neighborhood Caucus).

Mark M., the person to who Beverly’s request was implicitly directed, eventually, got a chance to respond, telling the group, “I cannot—as a BMA board member, as a mountain biker— I cannot, in fact, do exactly what you’ve asked” (CCG 10/15/09). Reflecting the discourse of balance, Mark M. explained that “Boulder’s the type of community that has people that ride
mountain bikes that have degrees in environmental sciences that are conservationists” (CCG 10/15/09). He added, “It’s very hard to apologize for someone attending the caucus when they are fully qualified and have every reason in the world to do” (CCG 10/15/09). In response to a request by Mark for confirmation that he was understood, Beverly tersely stated, “I heard you” (CCG 10/15/09).

Joe R., representing OSMP, attempted to highlight that “the people that you had a problem with in the Conservation Caucus are not in this room today” (CCG 10/15/09). Beverly rejoined, “The [selected CCG] alternate for the mountain bike group was in our caucus” (CCG 10/15/09). What relevance that person’s role in the CCG had is not clear, other than, perhaps, that some people might not want to work with her. That, however, was a moot point; Mark M. was absent only once from a CCG meeting.

Later, Peter built on some of the same themes described above, saying:

“...If I follow Todd’s instructions . . . to the letter, I would’ve been in the Conservation Caucus because that is my primary interest in Open Space. If there’s no conservation of Open Space, there is no Open Space to visit and enjoy. (CCG 10/15/09)

Peter also got closest to the principal problem between different discourses of conservation and recreation, telling the group:

“I don’t like being called a “recreationalist.” I find that a derogatory term, anymore than I think some people would like to be called “restrictionists,” which is sometimes how it [Conservation Caucus positions] can feel to us that attended the Recreation Caucus. (CCG 10/15/09).

Although the discourse of balance in conservation and recreation land management, and tensions inherent in that discourse, were constants in the CCG process, Peter’s comment about
the categories of “conservationist” and “recreationalists” was one of the few times during the CCG when CCG members talked directly about different uses and interpretations of those important symbols. Throughout the CCG, there was, of course, extensive talk about conservation and recreation, and about conservationists and recreationalists, but the different ways in which CCG members understood those categories rarely were the center of discussions. CCG members, as well as members of the larger Open Space community, tended to treat those umbrella categories as clearly defined, with shared meaning in the community. A result of not examining differences in meanings of those elemental terms in the local discourse was that public stakeholders of Open Space continually reproduced difficult relations among themselves, and between themselves and decision makers. As Peter’s comment above suggests, even somewhat benign terms, such as “conservationist,” could be and were used and interpreted as forms of naming calling. Sometimes, that name calling was explicit, and intended as such; at other times, categories of conservation and recreation were used simply because they were part of the everyday discourses of governing Open Space. What went unremarked throughout the CCG was how those categories made different sense depending on speakers’ and/or audience members’ different identification with the discourse of balance, as well as with other relevant discourses. The following section addressing discourses of governance (i.e., principles and practices of Open Space management), however, demonstrates the difficulty of learning (and respecting) how others make different sense of categories against the background of shared discourse when that discourse can be interpreted in different ways.

**Discourses of Governance**

After the kickoff meeting, the CCG entered a phase of “collaborative learning,” the purpose of which was to provide a common base of information for the group’s discussions.
During that period, OSMP staff members made presentations to the group about the CCG’s decision-making space, planning frameworks, and existing conditions; during the learning phase, discourses of balance most clearly and continuously intersected with larger discourses of parks and park management. Links between local and global discourses of park planning were not drawn explicitly during the CCG but the visitor experience is a concept with wide-reaching application, from museum studies (see, e.g., Falk, 2009; Roppola, 2012) to customer relations (see, e.g., in the communication discipline, see Chaim, 2008; Rikard, McComas, & Newman, 2011; Stamou & Paraskevopoulos, 2004, 2008). In the field of park management, the visitor experience is the keystone of planning and regulating human use of park amenities and natural areas (see, e.g., Daigle & Zimmerman, 2004; Hof & Lime, 1998; Manning, Lime, Hof, & Freimund, 1995). An interesting attribute of the visitor experience is that although it is an ideal to which planning can orient, it is highly particular (i.e., an individual-level construct) influenced by the totality of the individual in the setting (e.g., location, knowledge of place, previous experiences in that place, crowding, rules, and weather). Making understanding of the visitor experience even more difficult, determination of its quality is based on individuals’ anticipated experience compared with their actual experience, neither of which are constants. Accordingly, McCool (2006) described the challenge of managing the visitor experience this way: “All managers can do is provide the opportunity for visitors to achieve the experience they seek” (p. 8).

The visitor experience is a complex concept for managers and planners, but for the present purposes, it can be greatly simplified within the discourse of balance. Succinctly stated, managing and planning for the visitor experience seeks to balance competing desires for uses of the land (also known as access) with protection of natural resources (or conservation). Given
that there is no generalizable ideal of the visitor experience, many decisions or actions will degrade the experience of one type of visitor or another, and there are unpredictable impacts on individuals’ desired experience at different times. Planning and managing for the visitor experience, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s U.S. National Park Service (1997), is about “defining complementary visitor experience opportunities and resource conditions . . . but one which cannot always be accommodated in light of the equally valid goals of visitor experience diversity and resource protection” (p. 9). In other words, managing the visitor experience is about balancing competing interests of people, and of people and the environment. Manning et al. (1995) explained why such challenges were important to address: “High-quality visitor experiences are more likely to develop public appreciation of, and support for, conservation . . . of parks” (p. 41).

Many of the challenges of parks planning and management in light of the visitor experience, and reasons for meeting those challenges, as discussed in the literature, already have been discussed with regard to the planning and kickoff meeting of the CCG, and will continue to be discussed in the remainder of the report. This section seeks only to survey the local discourses of governing OSMP land for the visitor experience. Not all relevant texts and their interpretations can be considered here; consequently, the focus is on those documents that were most important to the CCG’s effort: (a) the Open Space Charter, (b) the Visitor Master Plan (VMP), and (c) OSMP’s trail standards. Each in turn is discussed below.

**Constitution: The Open Space Charter**

The Open Space Charter (hereafter, the Charter) is the founding document of the Open Space program. A short text, the Charter defined the principles and purposes of land held as Open Space, established the Department of OSMP to manage the program, and set up the Open
Space Board of Trustees as the program’s governing body. During the CCG, the Charter often was invoked as an argument for doing or not doing one thing or another. For the most part, those arguments concerned the section of the Charter that defined the purposes of Open Space.

According to the Charter (City of Boulder, 2012), Open Space land is “acquired, maintained, preserved, retained, and used only for” (Article XII, Sec. 176, para. 1) eight purpose: (a) preservation and restoration of natural areas; (b) preservation of water resources; (c) preservation of land for passive recreation; (d) preservation for agricultural uses; (e) utilization of land for shaping the development of the city; (f) utilization of nonurban land for spatial definition of urban areas; (g) utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains; and (h) preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value, and for its contribution to the quality of life of the community. There is not much written history about the Charter drafting in which interpretations of the founders’ intent can be grounded but speaking at an OSBT meeting in 2005, a member of the public said, “That list in the Charter was to provide direction for the use of Open Space money and acquired Open Space land. . . . There was no intent that the different purposes . . . had to be balanced everywhere” (Wright, OSBT 2/23/05). That statement, repeated in different ways during the CCG, captured fundamental differences in interpretations of the Charter’s stated uses of Open Space that informed many forms and appraisals of stakeholder categories during the CCG.

By the time of the CCG, it was official OSMP policy to work to “balance competing community needs and desires and to be fair in allocating recreational use opportunities [vis-à-vis preservation purposes]. Currently, Open Space purposes, as defined in the Open Space Charter, are not prioritized among competing uses” (City of Boulder, Department of Open Space and Mountain Parks, 2005, p. 29). Known in the community as the “principle of nonprioritization,” a
lack of hierarchy to the purposes of Open Space land was not a shared value, and its legitimacy was contested well before the CCG began. By 2009, the issue of nonprioritization had become a central term of debate in the Open Space community, with OSMP staff, in the context of the CCG, “not trying to set up opposition between recreation and conservation” (Mantione, CCG 11/10/09).

Peter made the first reference to the Charter during the CCG, saying:

I need a commitment from everyone here to adhere to . . . specific language in the Charter, being that those uses of Open Spaces—purposes of Open Space—are nonprioritized. I need a commitment here to not prioritize the uses of Open Space. I’ll make a commitment myself to not prioritize. (CCG 10/15/09)

That the CCG returned again and again to the principle of nonprioritization is not particularly interesting but it is important. As the exchange from the kickoff meeting in Excerpt 5.1 demonstrates, even when stripped of its political interpretations, there was not a definite understanding among CCG members of what was not to be prioritized, what constituted the Charter’s language, and, perhaps, even how illogical the principle of nonprioritization could be.

Excerpt 5.1. Priorities (CCG 10/15/09)

Art I just want to clarify that so I can feel comfortable making that commitment. Is that enhance, improve, protect, partner?

Peter It’s agricultural, preservation, urban shaping, passive rec, floodplains

Mark O. I’d like to serve as a vote for floodplains, that’s my first priority ((joking))

Karen Would somebody from over there read the mission statement? Because I think that goes with that and I’d like to talk about that same thing.

Mark O. The Open Space and Mountain Parks Department preserves and protects the natural environment the land resources that characterize Boulder. We foster appreciation of use that sustain the natural value of the land for current and future generations . . . It might be interesting for those who don’t know that, when the Open Space charter- there were 7 is it? 8? specific purposes that were set forth, and that’s what Peter was referring to, that no one of those is more important than the others. I think, specifically, it says in the charter that no one of those is more important.
In Excerpt 5.1, Art disclosed what he thought was to be valued equally, but he learned that he was incorrect. Karen then suggested that the OSMP mission statement be read, because “that goes with that.” Mark O. followed by returning to the Charter, getting the number of purposes stated in it incorrect, and then speculating that the Charter, itself, said something about nonprioritization. The Charter did not say anything about prioritization or nonprioritization of purposes; the purposes are listed without further comment. Here, CCG members, arguably, among the most informed Open Space stakeholders, demonstrated how much difference there was in community members’ interpretations of the Charter—the foundational document of the program, and thereby, people’s ability to be stakeholders in that program. In addition to its importance as governing document, among OSMP plans and policies, the Charter also was the simplest text, and intersected with only a handful of very general discourses. In contrast, the Visitor Master Plan, discussed next, was of another order.

**Plans: The Visitor Master Plan**

The OSMP VMP is one of three master plans guiding management of the Open Space program. The VMP set goals, priorities, and standards for the human elements of Open Space. In developing and implementing the VMP, four key goals were sought: (a) enhance the visitor experience, (b) improve access, (c) balance recreation and preservation, and (d) partner with the community. Because access and balance are parts of the visitor experience, the VMP’s list of goals is redundant for the present purposes; hence, for the sake of simplicity, I focus here on the visitor experience as it intersects with management of access and conservation.

There are seven key attributes of the visitor experience, according to the VMP: (a) human connection to the land, (b) access to destinations, (c) aesthetic attractiveness of the area, (d) the level of conflict, (e) safety, (f) remoteness of visit (e.g., crowding), and (g) offering
opportunities for a variety of activities. In 2003, a citizen panel found that OSMP was doing a good job on many of those attributes, but that members of some stakeholder categories believed that their access was limited, that there were problems with existing trails, and that different uses of the land, increasingly, were in conflict. As part of the response to those concerns, the VMP initiated a “management area” strategy. Management areas are the “geographic context for deciding which visitor activities are most suitable in a given area and what conditions will minimize impacts on other visitors or resources” (City of Boulder, 2005, p. 47). Three types of management areas were defined in the VMP—passive recreation areas, natural areas, and habitat conservation areas (HCA)—with increasingly restrictive general and specific uses as one moves from passive recreation areas to HCAs. During the CCG, the idea, definition, and boundaries of management areas were highly contested.

Related to the issue management zones is a an approach to park management called adaptive management, the idea that changes to natural systems should be implemented slowly, their impacts measured, and policies revised in light of information gathered from evaluation (see Stankey, Clark, & Bormann, 2005; B. K. Williams, Szaro, & Shaprio, 2009). The VMP had little to say about adaptive management, highlighting qualities noted here; adding only that “given the context of uncertainty, managing visitor use and natural resources is often experimental” (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005, p. 35). It is not surprising, then, that as the CCG progressed, and plans began to be formalized, the role of adaptation, particularly the question of monitoring impacts, became an issue of dispute. Another disputed planning ideal was the question of what constituted a good trail for the visitor experiences sought. The next section looks at the issue of trail standards.
Policies: Trails Standards

With respect to the visitor experience and resource protection, there is no more important aspect of park management than the trails (or lack of them) on which the experience occurs. As noted in the VMP, “Trails provide and guide visitor use . . . and allow visitors to travel to desired destinations” (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2005, p. 40). To the nonprofessional, a hiking trail is a pretty simple object; professionals, however, have an elaborate discourse of trail types and construction standards that are fitted to particular uses for a trail, the specific location of a trail on the landscape, and the land’s inherent qualities (e.g., dirt, clay, or bedrock) and surrounding environment. According to a survey conducted by OSMP (City of Boulder, Department of OSMP, 2008), more than 40% of trails in the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) were out of compliance with OSMP’s standards (adopted as part of the VMP). The overwhelming majority of noncompliant trails (81%) were due to the grade, or steepness, of the trail, with significant impacts being trail braiding (or widening) and erosion. Those numbers, however, in fact, are misleading, as the trail survey examined only designated trails.

Putting aside all of the technical aspects of trail construction and management, there are two types of trails in the Open Space system: designated and undesignated. The distinction is for management purposes only, as OSMP claims responsibility for designated trails but does not maintain undesignated trails. Undesignated trails are not inherently bad; they simply are trails that OSMP does not provide service to their upkeep; in which case, they can become environmentally damaging and dangerous to human use. Part of the purpose of the trail study area processes was to designate all of the trails on the land; those not designated were to be closed and reclaimed. Although that might seem to be a reasonable purpose, two things need to be understood. First, undesignated trails, also called “social trails,” provide access to and from
places that designated trails do not, and, therefore, are important parts of some people’s expected visitor experience. Second, questions about trails intersect with the management areas discussed here. In an HCA, for example, there can be no undesignated trails, as all travel in those areas must be “on trail,” meaning a designated trail. In a passive recreation or natural area, “off-trail” travel is permitted and, therefore, undesignated trails exist.

Discourses of Process

Whereas texts such as the Charter and the VMP constituted Sideboards for the CCG’s policy work, the “CCG Operating Protocols and Ground Rules” (hereafter, Ground Rules) informed and regulated the CCG itself. The Ground Rules established the CCG’s authority, charge, decision-making processes, roles, responsibilities, and forms of public communication. At the conclusion of the CCG kickoff meeting, when the group briefly discussed the Ground Rules, the interrelated issues of roles, responsibilities, and forms of communication were foregrounded. The following sections discuss each of those areas of the Ground Rules.

Rules

Suggesting differences in interpretation of those aspects among the OSMP staff, Todd, and CCG members, Mark O. opened the discussion by noting that one of the rules “just seems so Orwellian to me” (CCG 10/15/09). The specific item in the Ground Rules that Mark was referencing concerned public communication, and the seemingly sensible (i.e., non-Orwellian) requirement that representatives, alternates and participants may speak to the media on behalf of the party they represent but agree not to (a) reveal confidential or sensitive information, (b) discuss the progress of the negotiations (other than that they are progressing favorably), or (c) violate any of the Ground Rules. (City of Boulder, 2009g, para. 2–3)
Importantly, the Ground Rules defined “‘media’ . . . [as] members of the print, television and radio press; personal and organizational websites and blogs; and any other public information distribution mechanism” (Draft CCG Ground Rules, Media and Public, para. 1). These concerns about public communication connected with CCG members most directly with respect to the expectation that representatives engage in “regular two-way communication with their respective constituents to keep them informed of the process of the CCG and to seek their input” (Draft CCG Ground Rules, Media and Public, para. 2–3), and the responsibility of an individual CCG member of “fully representing the interests listed in the caucus in which he or she was selected” (Draft CCG Ground Rules, Media and Public, para. 2–3).

As Mark O. understood matters at the time, when CCG members sought to discuss the CCG outside the CCG, “either you’re [OSMP management] making quite an assumption, or you’re giving us two choices: things are great or no comment” (CCG 10/15/09). “That is the choice we’re giving you” (CCG 10/15/09), Todd responded. As long as “media” were understood in traditional terms of professional reporting, CCG members had no problem with the rule, as stated, but “media,” as defined in the Ground Rules, as CCG members understood them, was inclusive of their communication with constituents.

Peter explained the general position regarding media that emerged among CCG members during the discussion: “I suppose we would all agree to not court the media but I don’t see how we can actually communicate with our constituents—which I thought we were supposed to do that—without violating this rule” (CCG 10/15/09). Mark M. added that

we’re elected representatives. It was quite poignant that our responsibility is to communicate with our constituency honesty, with some detail . . . . If my
communications can only be in the positive, then that . . . doesn’t really fulfill the requirement of communicating to our constituencies responsibly. (CCG 10/15/09)

Todd responded to the constituency communication issue by noting that “this doesn’t apply to your constituency; it applies to the media” (CCG 10/15/09). However, CCG members continued to have a different interpretation of “media,” one that Todd saw as threatening to the process. Repeatedly, during the conversation, Todd told the group that communication restrictions were common and were meant to protect the process, saying, “I think you are making a serious mistake if you don’t agree to this particular provision,” “You could be potentially be jeopardizing the process by talking to the media,” “This actually comes from another protocol,” and “In labor–management negotiations, there’s always an agreement [about] when people talk to the media” (CCG 10/15/09). Ray pointed out that, in labor talks, “they don’t talk to their constituents until they recommend the contract or don’t, and go to the voters; if we’re going to talk to our constituents that means some things aren’t going to be secret” (CCG 10/15/09).

Although Mark O. framed the conversation as being about “either . . . communicating with the public or . . . not” (CCG 10/15/09), the principal disagreement was not public communication per se but the fulfillment of responsibilities of CCG members’ role as stakeholder representatives. Mark M., for example, explained that “the blog I started for my constituents . . . it’s a public blog. It’s a way I plan to communicate with my constituents, and that’s defined as ‘media’” (CCG 10/15/09). Ray added that “we communicate by electronic media, and none of that is secret today. . . . I automatically assume that those can get passed to anybody” (CCG 10/15/09). Mark O. said that “it cannot not be a rule; I’m just saying this is a weird Ground Rule” (CCG 10/15/09). Splitting the difference between Todd and CCG members, Gwen explained that she found “the wording . . . a little awkward,” but added, “I think
the Community Group Forum that we had before, something like this did occur and it did set us back” (CCG 10/15/09). At about that time, Dean interceded, saying, “Why don’t we take this one [issue about “media”] and give it further consideration?” (CCG 10/15/09).

A “Ground Rules Task Force” that included Todd, Mark O., and James was established, but in December, when the final draft of the Ground Rules was presented to the CCG, little had changed. The final rules described prohibited electronic communication as “publicly accessible websites and blogs” (Draft CCG Ground Rules, Media and Public, para. 2–3), and added that CCG members “cannot speak to the media on behalf of the entire CCG unless so appointed by the CCG” (Draft CCG Ground Rules, Media and Public, para. 2–3; italics added). Neither change seemed to address the underlying issue in the conversation at the kickoff meeting, but neither did any CCG members’ electronic communication during the CCG appear to cause disruption to the CCG.

Before concluding this section, the CCG opened, but did not discuss at length, a question that the OSBT had raised the previous summer about the board’s role, and that is discussed in the next chapter. Karen raised the matter at the kickoff meeting by asking, “Talking about roles, to talk about the Board of Trustees, [the Ground Rules say] it is ‘to support the CCG process.’ Can maybe you tell me what it looks like to ‘support the CCG process’? What does that mean?” (CCG 10/15/09). The answer, as Open Space board members had said the previous summer, and as Dean reiterated earlier in the kickoff meeting, was that “the board . . . made an effort to extricate themselves from the process. We are empowering this group to develop recommendations. . . . They are trying to create some distance- space to work with these recommendations” (CCG 10/15/09). Todd added that “support” means that “the board needs to basically endorse this process. What that means in a practical standpoint is that they need to tell
people—all of you—to work this out through the process” (CCG 10/15/09). Concerns and problems at the CCG level were not be taken to the board for resolution. “End runs really won’t be tolerated,” Todd said, “That’s really what it means” (CCG 10/15/09).

**Relations**

During the CCG’s first months (October 2009–December 2009), there was a significant amount of talking at CCG members by OSMP staff and the facilitator (see Figure 5.1), and a lot of CCG members’ conversation with staff was about various aspects of the WTSA and OSMP’s planning process; there was very little talk among CCG members. At a CCG meeting in January 2010, Michael explained how he had experienced the proceeding months:

> Having sat here for 4 months and hardly gotten to speak to anybody, except through Todd—or, well, through Todd—I really don’t know what on people’s minds. I look around the room and—Conservation Reps, do they hate me because I’m a Dog Rep? I don’t have a sense of people because we have been talked to and talked at. (CCG 1/20/10)

With respect to interaction among CCG members, Todd explained that the process was “getting there, moving from collaborative learning to more deliberative stuff.” As a result of the transition, Dean explained that “Joe [M.] and I have already talked about setting aside some time at the next meeting for this very purpose” (i.e., discussing intragroup communication). From the outset, then, the intragroup, cross-member communication of the CCG was plainly fleeting to nonexistent. Lack of interaction among CCG members invited negative interpretation of actions engaged in by the staff and by the facilitator, particularly when those actions suggested further separation between the caucuses and/or revived impressions of OSMP as attempting to structure preferred outcomes into the process. All of those matters came to a head at the meeting where
Michael made the comment above, which began with Mark M. explaining that “from the very beginning of this CCG, there has been a troubling amount of behind-the-scenes communication and manipulation, by Todd. . . . At this point, I trust all of you—outside of Todd” (CCG 1/20/10). Below, I present how Mark M. came to make that statement, why reactions to it were so varied, and its impact on the CCG.

Continuing with his prepared text, Mark M. explained that “a great deal of behind-the-scenes communication [by Todd] has been in regards to trust, or lack thereof, by one member to another or one group to another,” noting that he considered such actions to be “manipulative and divisive rather than communicative and trust building,” and holding that to correct the situation, “staff concerns and issues must be addressed openly and honestly with the group as a whole in the light of day” (CCG 1/20/10). Mark M.’s concerns were deeply seeded (i.e., “from the very beginning”), as well as personal, because, as he said, “at times, I have borne the brunt of this attention” (CCG 1/20/10).

![Figure 5.1. The Community Collaborative Group (February 2010). Source: Author](image)

The latest action that Mark M. interpreted as being biased was an e-mail that had been sent by Todd to the representatives, suggesting “private caucuses [i.e., meeting] with each group . . . to create a space where people can talk with each other and with me . . . openly and share their concerns without . . . sharing it with everybody” (Bryan, CCG 1/20/10). Concluding these
introductory remarks, and highlighting that Mark M. was not a lone voice, Michael noted, “This e-mail makes me . . . feel like there’s something going on. It makes me feel very uncomfortable” (CCG 1/20/10). Peter later attempted to summarize what was on the minds of those concerned with the message: “Some people do not trust Todd to bring forward the information he collects [from private meetings] in an unbiased way. . . . We do not trust that statement to reflect what [information] he’s gotten” (CCG 1/20/10).

Peter’s comment is interesting not because of its content but because it was necessary to clarify about what the group was talking. Among the parties connected most intimately to both sides of the CCG group (i.e., OSMP staff and representatives) were OSMP’s representatives to the CCG, who were working “behind the scenes” and at the table. Whit, however, was expressly baffled by the situation, saying, “There’s something that’s being unsaid here, and I really don’t know what it is . . . . I do not know who visited who in private” (CCG 1/20/10). Ned also needed more information, asking Mark M., “Why is it you distrust Todd more than everybody else in the room?” (CCG 1/20/10). Coming from the other direction (i.e., not distrusting Todd), James simply declared, “The facilitator is the facilitator . . . . I don’t see any reason for any limitations . . . . There is nothing that says it [i.e., interaction] has to be a certain way or another” (CCG 1/20/10).

Returning to Todd and his justification for the request, a particularly noteworthy interaction occurred when Todd “turn[ed] to Guy here—put him on the spot a little—because Guy knows a lot about mediation . . . [and] he may be able to confirm that mediators meet in private with their parties” (CCG 1/20/10). Todd’s quote blurred boundaries by requesting that a CCG representative represent the validity of Todd’s statement about his practice. Guy, who Todd noted, “studies it [i.e., mediation],” was asked to represent not just Todd but the field of
mediation writ large, in addition to his neighborhood constituents, suggesting how fluid, porous, and overlapping informal representation can be.

On the same topic, Mark O.’s rejoinder to Todd’s request was, “What is also common in mediation is based on a pretty fundamental principle, and that is that parties and interests select or at least agreed to their mediator. In this case, that did not occur” (CCG 1/20/10). In response, Todd parsed forms of mediation, and relations to the facilitator in those forms by the parties to the conflict, by which time, the conversation had tumbled along for 40 minutes without moving closer to a shared meaning of the central issue, leading the group to slip further and further from common interpretations about the reason(s) for Todd’s request and the reaction to it by Mark M. (and others). Ray, for example, was ready to agree to a general principle that facilitator and/or staff concerns about the CCG be brought to the group, as he said, “if we could stop talking about it” (CCG 1/20/10). Beverley remained “a little confused” (CCG 1/20/10), and Ned was unsure of the situation, explaining that “I do not have that history” (CCG 1/20/10).

Mark M.’s concern was not without a legitimate basis (as evidenced by others’ agreement with it) but, as with the initiating e-mail that had been sent by Todd, there was a failure to make assumptions and reasons explicit, leading to misinterpretation and further soured relations. All of those outcomes were avoidable, manifesting primarily due to the fact that meanings (or reasons) of both Todd’s and Mark M.’s communication did not acknowledge the possibility of differences in interpretations that influence understanding. In short, both men did a poor job of framing their comments or suggestions. Only through the prolonged, tense, and confused conversation reproduced above did the underlying concerns of both parties (assuming that there were only the two sides of staff/facilitator and representatives) emerge, by which time it was too late for reconciliation.
Todd came to explain that the lack of trust among representatives led him to seek an “opportunity to share privately where it’s [distrust] coming from” (CCG 1/20/10). Todd said that his “instinct [was] to do that privately,” such that representatives would be open with him, he could assess the relevance of the conflict to the CCG (i.e., whether it was an issue–interest–identity conflict or an interpersonal conflict), and “we can build it into the process rather than just throwing it on the table” (CCG 1/20/10). Mark M., for his part, did not mention until the conversation was closing that “the root of my concern . . . your [Todd] initiation of this rather than the group’s initiation of wanting to caucus separately” (CCG 1/20/10). Mark O., however, hit the high note, explaining to Todd:

I think the fact that you know more about all of us than we know about each other is not a help; I think it’s a real hindrance . . . . This is not going to be helped if we’re always off in the corners talking to you.

Although the conversation reviewed in this section came to no final conclusion, and the central issues were not discussed at the following meeting (or at any meeting thereafter), the discussion was not without its material and procedural consequences. Most important, between that meeting and the next meeting, plans were enacted for an alternative facilitator, as relations between Todd and some CCG members no longer were constructive. Todd left the CCG, but foreshadowing much broader results of the CCG, he did not leave the experience behind. The CCG, however, still needed to get through that evening’s meeting, part of which is discussed in the following section.

**Vision**

Immediately after the conversation about private meetings, Todd said to the CCG, “Okay, let’s turn to the rapid-fire visioning” (CCG 1/20/10). The visioning exercise had been proposed
at the previous CCG meeting, and it was described by Joe M. as a “brush of what we want for the West TSA . . . the shared vision . . . something that is meaningful to you” (CCG 1/7/10). The juxtaposition of the decidedly unshared vision about the CCG process issues in the episode above with the call for reflection on common ground was only one of many surprises during the CCG. Events preceding the visioning portion of the meeting, however, only added a degree of surrealness to presentations of CCG members’ vision statements. From the moment that the idea of visioning was proposed, CCG members were not particularly interested or invested in the exercise. When the group first discussed the idea, many felt, as Johannes said, that “I’d like less process and more results, personally” (CCG 1/7/10). Ray suggested that the group “get the bullet points . . . record them, make sure they’re in the minutes” (CCG 1/7/10). Michael thought that the exercise was not helpful because “we can all interpret these nice words differently” (CCG 1/7/10).

As a group, the general idea of writing a vision statement was not really contested but its form and purpose were. From within its discourses of planning, OSMP staff saw a CCG vision statement as a decision-making tool. Joe M. described it as “a touchstone that would give some guidance . . . that is, it will help us [the CCG] evaluate those various proposals that come down the line” (CCG 1/20/10). Gwen presented the possibility of generating a list of ideals for the WTSA, saying, “This way . . . we can just rank em” (CCG 1/20/10). Johannes was “concerned about creating something that isn’t clear—that’s broad—’cause I’ve read a lot of broad statements in the documents we’ve read so far [e.g., the Charter and VMP]” (CCG 1/20/10). Guy proposed “not so much a consensus vision . . . but a vision map, so that we can get some sense of what we agree on and disagree about” (CCG 1/20/10). Michael and Beverly thought similarly to Guy, with Beverly saying, “I would like to hear everybody’s suggestions, because I
don’t actually feel like I know everybody here . . . . That would be kinda a getting-to-know-you thing” (CCG 1/20/10). For her part, Karen said that she “wanted to voice the distinction between getting everybody’s ideas on the table and wordsmithing, which I would oppose the group doing collectively” (CCG 1/20/10).

All of the positions described here were not in line with Joe M.’s or Todd’s ideal for the visioning, which Todd said would be for “this group to have a common vision, something this group as a whole agrees to” (CCG 1/20/10). CCG members, perhaps, were not opposed to Todd’s ideal but they saw a tension between meaningfulness and effort inherent in developing a common vision statement. Michael, for instance, said of vision statements, “If they don’t [tell you much] they’re probably not worth doing, and if they do tell you a lot about the vision, they’re probably gonna take a lot of work” (CCG 1/20/10).

CCG members never developed a CCG vision statement but they did decide to blend some members’ ideas about presenting individual members’ visions and reason for sharing those ideas into the rapid-fire visioning. CCG members were invited to prepare a vision statement from their individual perspective and to share it with the group. Participants interpreted that task in two ways: as a vision for the WTSA or as a vision for the CCG process. Collectively, CCG members’ vision statements reflected the OSMP mission statement, discussed previously, with each statement being a variation on the theme of balancing conservation and recreation. The weight placed on either side of the hyphen revealed priorities that divided along predicable lines. Conservation Caucus members, generally, forwarded statements similar to James, who said, “The land and habitat are protected, but the experience and connection to the land is well protected, too” (CCG 1/20/10). Recreation Caucus members’ statements were reflected by Mark O., who envisioned “meaningful recreational experiences in the beauty of a natural setting”
The stress placed on recreation or conservation by members of those respective groups was not surprising but it is interesting the starkness with which the vision statements demonstrated different identifications with discourses of balance.

In addition differences between conservation and recreation in discourses of Open Space, the CCG members’ vision statements showed some other generally interesting things, as well as a few idiosyncratic characteristics that prefaced issues to come. First, both Guy and James connected Open Space with discourses of U.S. National Parks. James described his vision as protecting “this special area as a wilderness and park of national significance” (CCG 1/20/10). Guy was even more direct, saying, “For a succinct statement of the vision . . . we need look no further than . . . the National Park Service” (CCG 1/20/10). Beverly spoke of the WTSA as a “globally unique and highly valued natural resource” (CCG 1/20/10). Some of the vision statements provided insights into policy positions and interests. Ray, for example, named several groups that he envisioned would use the WTSA 100 years after the CCG, none of which were bicyclists. Mark M. called for “conservation practices that are data based, practical, effective, and minimize restrictions” (CCG 1/20/10). Michael and Johannes, who had protested the visioning, had seven- and two-word visions, respectively.

Finally, the OSMP CCG representatives and Guy addressed the CCG process in their vision statements. Surprisingly, given that the department pushed so hard for the visioning, vision statements from the OSMP representatives were pretty benign. Whit prefaced his vision by saying, “It doesn’t matter” (CCG 1/20/10). Whit mentioned that he sought to “work together to create an adaptive management plan for the West Trail Study Area” (CCG 1/20/10). Rick, standing in for Joe. R., wanted “the CCG [to] combine the voices of community members with OSMP staff,” to promote “excellent visitor amenities while protecting OSMP natural resources”
Although benign, in and of itself, Rick’s statement, within local discourses and prior CCG visions, was quite profound.

OSMP often had been criticized as being a supporter of conservation over recreation in all cases, with some community members going so far as to call the land/program “Closed Space.” In comparison to the other CCG vision statements, and the clear division in members’ stress on one side of the conservation or recreation balance debate in the majority of those statements, Rick’s vision statement fit better with the recreation category. Guy also troubled the conservation–recreation binary, envisioning the CCG “as one of the more significant milestones in Boulder’s evolution . . . [particularly] its role in getting Boulder out of the either–or . . . trap, and figuring out how to do what is now often regarded as impossible” (CCG 1/20/10).

**Conclusion**

Stakeholder categories always are used and interpreted from within both local and global discourses. Discourses in which stakeholders use and interpret categories, however, are not always shared, and when those discourses are shared, they can be understood differently by different individuals and groups. Participation in practice, therefore, faces at least two challenges when attempting to account for relevant discourses. First, parties for whom a given relevant discourse is new need to learn not only the discourse but ways parties for whom that discourse is important interpret the discourse. In the material presented in this chapter, that necessity is best illustrated by the policy and planning discourses that were introduced to the Community Collaborative Group during its first months. Although that discourse was not “new” to most of the CCG members, how OSMP used that discourse to do planning was unusual and often fell from theoretical discourses of ideals into practical discourses concerning how Open Space planning occurs on the ground, where rules were bent or broken due to existing
conditions. Another striking example occurred when Todd and the CCG members disagreed about means of representative–constituent communication.

The second concern about discourses for practical participation are the various interpretations that stakeholders can have about their shared discourses. Open Space stakeholders share many discourses, but the most important is a local articulation of global discourse of “balance” in park stewardship. Although all people with a stake in parks as parks (as opposed to potential sites for commercial development) draw from and contribute to discourses of balance, this chapter makes clear that the valance of balance in that discourse varies based on individual and collective interests. As in other discourses, there is no single ideal of “balance” that can be measured to the satisfaction of all concerned parties, and, therefore, it is important to surface what parties to such discourses mean by the term. Simply defining the term, or the range of allowable impact, however, is insufficient; not only is a concept, such as balance, interpreted in many different ways but on any given decision, an individual’s or group’s limits of acceptable impact may change.

Additionally, when stakeholders begin to engage in formal participation process, all parties to participation must not only learn a discourse of the process, but constitute that discourse as well. Participation processes change (if only temporarily) how stakeholders govern, and how they talk about governance, from questions about who is speaking for whom to how parties interact at the table and in the community. Importantly, those process discourses are also used and interpreted from within shared and divergent discourses. With respect to the CCG, Todd approached the process discourses from his perspective as a facilitator and his experience as such in other contexts. OSMP staff understood the CCG process as a part of the agency’s planning discourse. CCG members, for their part, interpreted aspects of the process from two
primary positions, as representatives and as advocates. When the different discourses of the various parties to the CCG confronted each other there was a clear need for means of openly discussing differences therein. Parties to the CCG, however, sought for the most part to impose their preferred interpretation of process discourses on all parties, leading to resistance, and then to conflict, on all sides.

Each of the discourses discussed in this chapter, and their many interpretations, were consequential to the CCG, but perhaps none more so than discourses of the participation process. How individuals understood and presented themselves in discourses of balance, and how that discourse was interpreted in local governance, were important; but, it was with respect to the CCG process itself that understanding the other’s interpretations was most directly impactful on the CCG. Although not exclusively, the CCG conversations about “media” relations, private discussions, and visioning produced strain on the CCG at all levels, and broke relations between the CCG and Todd. The departure of Todd had many impacts on the CCG, two of which were structurally important. First, Heather, a new facilitator, was contacted with by OSMP, which required integrating her into the existing process. Relatedly, because Heather had not been previously involved in the CCG, upon her arrival, the CCG had no existing plan for moving through its policy deliberations. For several weeks after Heather joined the process, she, OSMP staff, and CCG members groped for a way to organize their discussions about the WTSA. Although not of focus in this report, that collective searching for a method, while not improving CCG member relations, was perhaps useful in making CCG members feel like they had a stake in the CCG. There remained, however, one more barrier to a constructive CCG process: the people not at the table. The next chapter looks at how those outside the CCG also needed to be part of the discourses about discourses, and categories within those discourses, for the CCG to be
successful. As with the discourses discussed in this chapter, it was the discourse of processes that were most important to the public at large.
Chapter 5 Notes

1. The CCG kickoff and orientation meeting was hastily scheduled because of delays due to protests made about the CCG caucus meeting, which are discussed in Chapter 6. Due to the haste with which the kickoff meeting was set up, not all CCG representatives were able to attend.

2. Management of environmental dimensions of OSMP were guided by the Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan (GEMP) and the Forest Ecosystem Management Plan (FEMP).

3. Another local description for undesignated/social trails was “citizen trail,” a term with heavy moral overtones.
CHAPTER 6

STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVES

The previous chapter argued that categorization within, and dis/identification with, relevant discourses are of interest to stakeholder participation theory and practice. The importance of categorization and/or dis/identification, however, is greatest when the two are coupled and joined with ideals and enactments of representation. Questions about representation in literature on participation, generally, are of two types: the first question asks who is represented (or who is a legitimate stakeholder), and the second question concerns how representatives are selected. Importantly, stakeholder legitimacy and selection of representatives are among the simplest questions about stakeholder representation. The more difficult issue concerns ideals and enactments of representation, which is the subject of this and the following chapter. Before turning to “representation,” or what representatives do, the issue of representatives’ roles, or what representatives should do, must be confronted. As suggested by some of the events that were discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, ideals about the proper role of stakeholder representatives have little to do with structures. Rules for representatives are necessary, but to be a representative is to be in relation with constituents, and that relationship centers on the management of meanings across boundaries of participation that can never be fixed or finalized.

Episodes of the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) Community Collaborative Group (CCG) reported above have hinted at differences concerning roles and responsibilities of stakeholder representatives, but such issues were more prominent than has yet been noted. The principal site
of contestation about representation during the CCG concerned who represented stakeholders in the category of “Neighbor” to the WTSA, and how formal representatives represented the interests of “Neighbors.” First disputed during the planning stages, the abstract and undefined idea of “Neighbor” representation began to take concrete forms in late Spring 2010; differences about the role of “Neighbor” representative quickly followed in loud and spectacular ways. However, understanding different ideals that were held among stakeholders about the role of representatives is necessary, but insufficient; as the narrative below evidences, roles of formal representatives during the CCG were idealized not just in “legal” and personal definitions but in individual relations to the issue at hand and to the interests of parties with a stake in that issue.¹ In the absence of common definitions/ideals of issues and interests at stake, stakeholders with different meanings of representatives’ roles interpreted performances of representation in relation to different interpretations of issues and interests of the stakeholders being represented. The role of “Neighbor” representatives is focal in this chapter, but similar matters were raised about other representatives as well, and are addressed below when appropriate.

Conceptually, this chapter attends to three primary issues about differences in ideals and enactments of roles of representatives that existed among CCG representatives, decision makers, and the public at large. The first section returns to the planning stages of the CCG, to examine how the category of “Neighbor” was named as a stakeholder interest but that parties to the planning never reached consensus about who was a legitimate “Neighbor,” or about the interest of those people who were called “Neighbors.” The second section brings the CCG story back to late Spring 2010—where Chapter 5 ended—to discuss how failure to define the interests of “Neighbor” stakeholders left members of that category dis/identifying with different discourses of “Neighbor” interests. The practical result of those multiple dis/identifications was that when
CCG Neighborhood Representatives attempted to represent “Neighbors,” they never were able to do so in ways that satisfied all “Neighbors,” leading to problems for the CCG. The third section focuses on the many ideals of the representatives’ role that were circulating during the CCG. In that final section, a discussion among the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) is used to evidence challenges in managing the representative–constituent relations that faced all parties.

**Representative Roles and Categorization**

This section introduces the issue of the CCG Neighborhood Representatives by returning to events during the CCG’s planning and selection phases, when stakeholder categories, and who would represent members of those categories, were being named. The important point to take from the discussion is that parties to those events, although often raising questions about neighborhood or neighbor interests, did not, before the CCG began, seek to specify or inquire about neighbors’ concerns and positions with regard to policy for the WTSA. The omission of such conversations was critical because, prior to the CCG, there had not been a meaningful category of Neighbor in the discourses of Open Space governance. The first section below looks at how the empty category of Neighbor was named and some of the contestations about its possible content during planning for the CCG. The second section looks at how Neighbor first was (re)interpreted by neighbors at the CCG caucus meeting, and how that event set the stage for later struggles over the role of neighborhood representatives.

**Naming Neighbors**

Neighbors were cited as an important consideration for WTSA planning as early as the first discussion about the CCG. In Spring 2009, an OSBT member said that “neighborhood involvement is the largest challenge, especially since they are an unorganized group” (Fineberg, OSBT 4/22/09). At the time, neighborhoods had not yet become a meaningful category in the
CCG’s process discourse; at that time, what became the “Neighborhood Caucus” was an undefined “at-large” category. In July 2009, at the last public discussion with the OSBT about the CCG framework, Todd described the five CCG stakeholder categories as: “recreation, conservation, cultural resources and unaligned/at-large (representing broader goals of the community)” (Bryan, OSBT 7/8/09). At the same meeting, a board member, using the language for stakeholders that Todd had introduced, expressed “reservations about combining at-large with the neighborhoods, and thought it would be important to designate neighborhood issues as a specific Community of Interest” (Putnam, OSBT 7/8/09). Aware that both neighbors and at-large would constitute large categories, one board member suggested that the neighborhoods divide internally by geography, with their representatives selected by and speaking for residents of a land area.

Days after the July OSBT meeting, discussed above, a “WTSA Open House” was held to introduce the final plan for the CCG to the public and to answer questions about the plan. By that time, the at-large category had become “Neighbors,” with the boundaries of membership still undefined. As the story goes, there was disagreement among those planning the CCG (including the board) as to what the geographic boundaries of the category should have been. On one side of the debate were those who thought that inscribing the line of Neighbor membership about three blocks from Open Space would highlight certain issues affecting only, or most dramatically, those people living nearest to Open Space. That category was called “Adjacent Neighbors.” Others involved in the discussion held that the limited membership of Adjacent Neighbors would lose sight of the broader community, whose use of Open Space can be in direct conflict with interests of Adjacent Neighbors. In the end, the latter position succeeded in
defining the Neighborhood Caucus as residents of Boulder living west of HWY 93/Broadway Street, which bisects the city east to west.

Figure 6.1 shows the physical dimensions of both the adjacent neighbors and the final neighbors categories, as well as the placement of U.S. federal government property that bordered, and, in some cases, was part of Open Space.² The natural (e.g., slopes) and built (e.g., roads) geography of Boulder means that areas west of Broadway vary in size, but, generally, differences between Adjacent Neighbors and the final boundaries of Neighbors were two to four times as much land, meaning that membership in the category increased by thousands. After the WTSA Open House, all parties to the planning scattered for the remainder of the summer, and questions of what interests or stakes all those Neighbors had in the WTSA and CCG never were discussed publicly as part of the CCG planning. When the CCG Caucus Meeting was held, Neighbor interests that had once been related to Adjacent Neighbors (e.g., parking, trash, and noise) were presented to a constituency that did not see logic in that organization. At the CCG Caucus Meeting, Neighbors sought to redefine interests of Neighbors, and their success in doing so set the stage for later conflicts over representation of those interests.

Figure 6.1. Geographic boundaries of the neighborhood caucus.
The Neighborhood Caucus(es)

When attendees to the Neighborhood Caucus gathered at the CCG caucus meeting in September 2009, their section of the meeting place was encircled by handwritten signs naming neighborhood interests; around the room were posted the words: access, safety, parking, trash, and privacy. The process for the meeting was to have participants divide by those categories, and select representatives to the CCG from among those best able to speak from a “neighborhood perspective” to those named interests. That plan did not last long.

Gathered together, the approximately 70 Neighbors listened as the facilitator of their group’s discussion explained the evening’s process and the neighborhood interests tacked to the walls (see Figure 6.2). As the facilitator explained, “The reason for subgroups in this caucus is a way to coalesce around three smaller groups; generally, I care more about privacy and safety, and so I wanna make sure somebody’s really talking to those issues” (CCG Caucus 9/15/09). Participants, however, found division by those interests to be illogical. A member of the group asked, “Could we eventually split up into three regions instead of these types of issues, because I think one person brought up earlier that [the people selected] have to represent a neighborhood?” (CCG Caucus 9/15/09). The facilitator, however, pressed that the interest-based approach was best, responding that “whoever represents neighbors isn’t representing a geographic location; its representing interests. . . . I think it’s more important that interests are represented” (CCG Caucus 9/15/09).

“I don’t disagree with that idea,” a participant responded, adding that to “understand what a certain neighborhood wants, it makes sense to split into South, Central, and North, so the representative can be accountable to the people” (CCG Caucus 9/15/09). The facilitator, however, continued to push a division by interests with which few in the room seemed to
identify, and that the facilitator even noted were somewhat arbitrary: “I’d rather not talk about process anymore,” she explained, “Ultimately, you are electing three people to represent neighborhood issues, which are these and a lot more” (CCG Caucus 9/15/09).

Figure 6.2. The Neighborhood Caucuses (September 2009). Source: Author

After a few more turns in the discussion, the facilitator gave up the demand that the neighborhood representatives be selected based on the predefined interests. Instead, a geographical division—northern, central, and southern neighborhoods—was adopted. Those categories, and what followed that evening and across the CCG’s life span, invalidated the facilitator’s claim that “as soon as this meeting is over, you don’t have to care about any of these [interests or issues]; they are only a way to get at three people” (CCG Caucus 9/15/09). In fact, nothing was more important than what interests or issues were represented by the category of Neighbor.

The Central and Northern Neighborhood Caucus selections were not particularly eventful, according to participants.³ The Southern Neighborhood Caucus, however, was a contested event with long-lasting and deeply impactful consequences. Like the “infiltrators” in the Conservation Caucus, some Southern Neighborhood Caucus participants were viewed as interpreting Neighborhood interests and issues in ways that were opposed to perspectives of other people in the caucus. More specifically, some participants were viewed as supporting biking in the WTSA, which others opposed, and the latter class believed that bike supporters
would not represent fairly their opposition to bikes. Even more accurately, supporters of bikes were considered to have been recruited by the Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance (BMA) with the intention of pushing a “pro-bike” agenda. Unlike the Conservation Caucus, where similar perceptions existed, with the neighbor category divided by geography, people’s status as legitimate Neighbors could not be contested on symbolic grounds. The fact was that as a geographic area, Neighbors included people who supported bikes in the WTSA. In the South Neighborhood Caucus, two people who were perceived by some as being pro-bike were selected as the CCG representative and alternate.

Immediately after the caucuses, complaints were lodged with the OSBT about the Southern Neighborhood Representatives (SNRs) and the caucus process. Those protests led the CCG’s start date to be deferred until the OSBT held a public discussion about those issues the following month. Paramount among critics of the caucus meeting and its outcomes were whether the “[southern] neighborhood representative . . . represent[ed] himself honestly” (Hartogh, OSBT 10/14/09); whether Scott (and Guy) were “concerned with access above all other issues” (S. Browing, OSBT 10/14/09); and whether, as result of those charges, “the elected representative does not have the best interests of the neighborhood in mind” (Dreiman, OSBT 10/14/09). “Access,” as discussed in Chapter 5, is a broadly inclusive term, which, in the context of conflict concerning the SNRs, can be interpreted in two ways. First, a focus on access could have meant that the representatives were interested in issues related to the interior of the WTSA, not impacts at the neighborhood boundaries. There were hints of that reasonable concern at the OSBT meeting, such as a member of the Northern Neighborhood Caucus expressing fear that “neighborhood issues such as parking, litter and safety may not be given the same consideration as trail access by their CCG representative” (Monson, OSBT 10/14/09).
Mostly, however, the dispute about neighborhood representatives was about whether a CCG representative could be a member of the category of bike stakeholders (defined as those who supported bike access to the WTSA) and, at the same time, be a legitimate voice for Neighbors. Some at the OSBT meeting thought that “bikers” could represent neighbors, whereas others did not believe that they could. The perceived conflict between interests, perhaps, was not unique with respect to questions about who can speak for who, but because Neighbors disagreed about the symbols and meanings of issues and interests of the Neighbors category, some viewed bike supporters as illegitimate voices for neighborhoods, and, therefore, the CCG, itself, became circumspect. As a member of the public stated, “Representatives that were voted in were not honest as to their affiliation with mountain biking” (M. Browing, OSBT 10/16/09). Another added that she “feels duped into supporting the representative for her neighborhood” (Douglas, OSBT 10/16/09). Finally, a speaker explained that, in his opinion, the “process has already been plagued with inconsistencies, imbalance, unintended consequences and Trojan horses. . . . The clear intent of the CCG has been broken” (Reynolds, OSBT 10/16/09).

Dispute about meanings and membership in the Neighbor category was not simply about who did and did not belong, or who could (or should) speak for neighbors at the CCG table. As discussed in Chapter 4, the design and facilitation of the caucus meeting had sought to essentialize stakeholder categories. The reason for doing that was not because people were thought to be one-dimensional but because there was, in existing discourses, a belief that people identifying most with some categories would not be reflexive about community interests writ large. In the current example, the question was about bikes and neighbors, but the same principles apply to other members of the Recreation Caucus, as well as, in an inverse relationship, to members of the Conservation Caucus. For example, having as recreation
representatives people who identified most strongly with the category of conservation would have tilted the CCG’s discussion about recreation towards conservation, just as the ideal of conservation would have been tilted by strong identification with the category of recreators. With respect to parks, such as the WTSA, the tension between access and preservation are inherent in every stakeholder to the land; all things being equal, every step taken by a conservationist affects the land as much as does a recreationist’s foot. In the case of Neighbor, those two sides of Open Space stakeholders were placed into the same category, and category members then were instructed to ignore those competing interests and issues in favor of “neighborhood issues.”

Critics of the caucus meeting were not restricted to the general public. Although the SNRs were contested, the caucus meeting did result in the selection of CCG members/representatives, some of whom were not pleased with the process or outcomes, generally, or with respect to neighbors, specifically, and others who were part of the perceived subversion of the caucus process. Three CCG Conservation Caucus Representatives spoke at the OSBT meeting following the caucus meeting, all unhappy with what they had witnessed or with the selected neighborhood representatives. Beverly, for instance, said that “mountain bikers . . . engaged in a concerted effort to stack the deck in their favor . . . . They show a lack of integrity and respect for others” (OSBT 10/14/09). Ray made a similar comment, saying that “the selection process was deliberately subverted” (OSBT 10/14/09). Finally, Karen spoke about the issue, explaining that she was “concerned with the violation of the ground rules . . . believes the process was compromised, and would like to see a revote of the neighborhood representatives” (OSBT 10/14/09).
Aside from the added questioning of the legitimacy of CCG members by other CCG members, Karen’s statement is interesting because, by virtue of residency, she was a member of the South Neighborhood Caucus. Overlapping stakeholder categories membership, of course, was common (if not endemic) to Open Space stakeholders, but in this particular case, distinctions between categories collapsed. Just down the road from Karen’s home is the home of Jason Vogel, who was president of BMA during the CCG, and a vigorous (if not always effective) advocate for off-road cycling in Boulder. On the “bike question,” Karen and Jason were paradigm examples of opposing positions, which also would place them (in some people’s perceptions) at opposite ends of the “conservation question,” but as Neighbors, their polar opposite positions on those questions were grouped in the same category. Differences of opinion on policy cannot be ignored, and by its admission, BMA gamed the caucus meeting, but neither of those concerns were the crux of the SNR conflict; that “Neighbor” gathered such differences under a single category and then expected an individual to be able to speak from a single position was the principal reason that the SNRs became such a contested symbol.

Finally, Mark M. also spoke at the October OSBT meeting, and his participation that night inherently was interesting but also symbolically important. At the time, Mark was a BMA board member, and, as discussed above and in previous chapters, BMA was considered by some to have violated the spirit of the caucus meeting by recruiting bike supporters to stand as representatives in non-bike caucuses. Those actions were the background for charges of bias that were levied against Scott and Guy. As discussed in Chapter 4, Mark thought that BMA’s manipulation of the caucus meeting “definitely created a ruckus,” but he forwarded the argument that “Boulder is the type of community that has people that ride mountain bike that have degrees in environmental sciences that are conservationists” (CCG 10/21/09). At the OSBT meeting in
October 2009, Mark had made a similar comment, explaining that he “believes the real problem of the caucus process was a failure to recognize the diversity of the community interested in Open Space issues and the West TSA” (OSBT 10/14/09).

To a degree, Mark’s charge was correct, but, again, as noted previously, Open Space stakeholders were responsible for essentialist discourses of stakeholder categories, and actions such as those of the BMA at the caucus meeting were an example of why some mountain bikers dis-identified with existing discourses of mountain biking in Boulder. Instead of viewing the community as being responsible for its discourse, Mark and others placed responsibility for hardened boundaries between relevant categories with the OSMP staff and Todd. Furthermore, and perhaps most damaging, was that people holding such an opinion thought that it was not negligence to recognize diversity but conscious effort on OSMP’s part to tilt the CCG in favor of conservation. As Mark said, “The department kept the rules to the [caucus] meeting secret” (OSBT 10/14/09).

For its part, the OSBT’s sentiment about the SNRs was summarized by a board member who explained that she was “inclined to say that this was a democratic vote and the process should move forward,” although she noted that “there is still concern about the lack of trust and feelings of ill will that has been voiced” (Taucher, OSBT 10/16/09). In attempting to move forward through the challenge of neighborhood representation, the OSBT instructed OSMP staff to “trust but verify” that “all” southern neighborhood interests were represented. Specifically, the Neighborhood Representatives were instructed to “commit to and demonstrate success at implementing a strong communication and outreach program with their neighborhood constituents” (OSBT 10/14/09). The following section details how well the communication and
outreach program worked by looking at the many ways that a certain text from the SNR was interpreted by SNR constituents, and how their protests injured and maimed the CCG process.

**Representative Roles and Identification**

After Heather had joined the CCG as the facilitator, the CCG proceed with what were called “Individual Plan Proposals” (IPP). IPPs were short proposals made by individual members that described a planning option for any part of the WTSA. Structurally, IPPs were idiosyncratic, with Heather telling the CCG that each member was “going to take different approaches . . . [and] we don’t know what those are going to look like” (CCG 5/3/10). During the first round of IPPs (April 2010), there was high uniformity to presenters and presentation form; all principal CCG representatives read prepared statements. Those presentations passed uneventfully, with Heather expressing concern only about members focusing on the negative (i.e., what they did not want) and their lack of respect for time limits of the exercise.

The second round of IPPs was more varied, not only in terms of presentation (e.g., members read text and gave presentations with visual aids) but also with regard to who was presenting for which caucus. Michael, for example, was absent from the second round of IPPs, and his alternate read a statement that Michael had written. Art also was missing, and his alternate made a presentation in which no distinction was drawn between what she said and Art’s positions but neither was the statement explicitly described as a joint effort. Finally, Scott, the representative for the southern neighborhoods, was not present, and his alternate, Guy, made a presentation, the content of which was attributed to himself and Scott.

By the time that Guy was done speaking that evening, fears of those critical of the SNRs after the CCG Caucus Meeting, in their view, were confirmed. Unlike previous process issues (e.g., trust among CCG members), this “new” situation could not be contained to the CCG or to a
few parties across the CCG’s boundary. In a matter of days, word about Guy’s presentation had spread across the Open Space Community, and protests began piling up at the foot of the OSBT.

In this section, I present events leading up to and including a meeting of the OSBT where the board addressed issues raised by Guy’s presentation. The OSBT meeting also was a scheduled midpoint for updating the board about the CCG, regularly described as the midcourse review (MCR). Together, events discussed below spanned a 4-week period, with each week involving either the CCG or the OSBT confronting questions about Guy/Scott’s presentation, and Scott’s and Guy’s role as representatives of Neighbors. These events show how the absence of a discourse about neighborhood issues and interests left the neighborhood representatives and neighbors without a meaningful category of Neighbor with which to dis/identify. Therefore, representatives and neighbors dis/identified meanings of the category of Neighbor from different positions within the local discourse of balance.

Interpreting Representative Roles

Most of the WTSA is mountainous terrain, but the southeast corner is one of the last remnants of ancient tall grass parries that once stretched for thousands of square miles. That region, like all of the others in the WTSA, is bordered by residential housing; residents there were known during the CCG as the “southern neighbors,” the geography of which stretched about two miles to the north along the Open Space boundary. The northern part of the area was important for other reasons; the principal SNR conflict concerned the southern-most grassland area. Boulder’s mountain backdrop is the exciting side of Open Space, but its attractions draw millions of visitors, putting enormous pressure on resources (e.g., trails and vegetation) in the mountains. Spreading use into the grasslands was a pragmatic response to mountain crowding that Guy foregrounded in his IPP presentation associate degradation in the backdrop.
Stating his position, Guy told the CCG that the prairie is “a gigantic area, so the question is really . . . can we find a way to put more visitors in this area?” (Burgess, 5/3/10). Those of Guy’s words certainly bothered some southern neighbors, but it was his repeated encouragement of biking in the grasslands that drew rejoinders. As part of the effort to move visitors into currently lower use areas, Guy explained that “we can provide mountain bike access to take off some of the pressure off [parking and public transportation]” (CCG 5/3/10). One mention of bikes might have passed without much notice, but Guy went on to talk about “find[ing] a way [for] . . . a mountain bike trail to wind its way through ecological zones,” and concluded by saying, “I think there’s a lot more support for some sort of mountain bike experience to go south” (CCG 5/3/10).

Perhaps even more central than proposing a bike option was that Guy made no explicit mention of some of his constituents’ opposition to mountain bikes in the area in which he was proposing to place them. Cognizant that neighbors were “not a homogenous group of constituencies” and that “there’s so many conflicts that are really embodied in this group,” Guy characterized his constituency as similar to “a person with a split personality” (CCG 5/3/10). However, with respect to increased access, which many on one side of that personality did not want, Guy said only that “nobody I’ve talked to wants their access to be rationed; there are a few folks who wouldn’t mind somebody else’s access, but that’s another issue” (CCG 5/3/10). Opposition to bikes never was mentioned.

Unsurprisingly, some southern neighbors took umbrage with Guy’s presentation, and the following week, they expressed their “appalled,” “outraged,” and “disappointed” protests to the OSBT. The people who spoke to the OSBT, and those who supported them, were known first through a descriptive category of their neighborhood, later morphing into an informal interest
group that was named “Save Open Space” (SOS; www.sosboulder.org). More than anything else, what SOS members wanted was continued prohibition of mountain biking in the WTSA; to “save” Open Space from bikes. SOS’s message to the OSBT following Guy’s presentation was that their CCG representative(s) was/were not representing that perspective.

A founding SOS member explained that the “representation we are receiving . . . has a conflict of interest” (D. Harris, OSBT 5/12/10), and another speaker noted that “the South neighborhood is being silenced” (Browning, OSBT 5/12/10). Sticking the point, a resident asserted that “the North and Central representatives do reflect neighborhood concerns, whereas the statement by the South representative favors mountain biking” (Maple, OSBT 5/12/10). The solution to their lack of representation, in the opinion of those individuals, was simple: Unseat the SNR and alternate for cause. Several speakers made that suggestion, one explicitly asking “OSBT for their [sic] help in removing the two . . . from the West TSA group” (Douglas, OSBT 5/12/10). Pointing to the significance of the issue, a final speaker told the board that because “representatives of the south neighborhood do not represent the views of the neighborhood . . . . [She] does not feel the [CCG] process is fair” (C. Harris, OSBT 5/12/10).

In response to such protests, board members had a brief discussion before deciding to address those (and other related) issues at the next OSBT meeting, and added them to an already scheduled retreat, both occurring the following month. Before then, however, the CCG had a meeting where that group discussed these developments.

By the time that the CCG met on June 2, some members were aware of events that had occurred at the OSBT meeting, discussed above. Word also had spread in the community at large, and the CCG meeting that night had its highest number of public members present and speaking to that date (see Figure 6.3). Unlike the board meeting a few weeks prior, public
speakers at the CCG meeting were of diverse opinions on questions raised by Guy’s proposal, and responses from affiliates of SOS. Speaking on Scott and Guy’s behalf, one person described the general theme of supporters’ position, stating, “Scott and Guy have been excellent listeners,” but that she “was disappointed that a small group [i.e., SOS] could undermine a process that is working” (Wolfe, CCG 6/2/10). What came out of the public comments most strongly were different interpretations of “neighborhood issues” and the “representative role” underlying the conflict.

Figure 6.3. A Community Collaborative Group meeting (June 2010). Source: Author.

Questions about neighborhood issues and representation of them dominated the public comments to the group at the CCG meeting on June 2. A speaker, supportive of the SNRs, and a Neighbor, himself, explained that he was “surprised to hear that dogs and bikes were not part of the neighborhood discussion” (Brown, OSBT 6/2/10). On the other side of the conflict, an SOS member told the CCG that it was “unreasonable to say that dogs and bikes are not neighborhood issues” (Harris, OSBT 6/2/10). Although these two speakers agreed that dogs and bikes were “neighborhood issues,” another explained that “the majority of the [Open Space and Mountain Parks] board said to keep biking separate from neighborhood issues,” and she urged “the south Boulder reps to read the minutes of the board meetings” (Douglas, OSBT 6/2/10). The last statement concerning separation of bikes was true, but, as Scott noted that night, “it’s funny, dog
access, mountain bike trail access, are not really considered quote unquote neighborhood topics yet they are a couple of topics that we hear just about every time we solicit input” (CCG 6/2/10).

At the same meeting, Guy talked about what he had said during his IPP presentation, focusing on how he thought that the lack of qualifications and the statement’s sweeping scope led to misinterpretation. “I made the mistake,” Guy explained, “of opening up too many complex ideas into a short time,” adding that “there are lots of people who didn’t want them [mountain bikes]. I recognize those things moving forward” (CCG 6/2/10). Guy then noted that part of the reason for the current Southern neighborhood uprising was because “nobody quite knows when the decisions can be made and what’s on the table” (CCG 6/2/10). To Guy’s notion of how opaque and complex the CCG was from the outside, Chuck, then a formal representative for cultural resources, added that by appealing to the OSBT, “members of the public have been going around the process that we set up” (CCG 6/2/10). Other CCG members echoed Chuck’s critique of the public’s responsibility in the representative–constituent relationship, as well as the necessary public respect for the CCG process as a whole.

Rounding out their conversation on these matter, CCG members entertained a request from Scott, who said, “I would like to ask for permission to communicate with the OSBT . . . so I can clear up and protect my good name, both in the [Open Space/Boulder] community but also the professional trails community” (CCG 6/2/10). CCG members, generally, were supportive of the request, with one major condition: “Speak when spoken to,” as Scott put it in protest (CCG 6/2/10). Mark M., for example, argued that Scott and Guy should be able to comment “if it’s a topic for the Open Space Board of Trustees . . . and OSBT wants to hear from them,” adding, “it might be a moot point, but my understanding is that the OSBT has an interest in this” (CCG 6/2/10). Scott and Guy’s “right to go there and give their perspective” (Bakwin, 6/2/10) was the
primary topic of the conversation, but for CCG members, a larger question was on the table as well.

Michael opened the possibility of widespread disruption to the CCG if similar charges about the role of representatives continued, saying:

For me, representing dogs, many of my constituents don’t want bikes introduced into the WTSA, and some don’t want to concede any trails to become “no dog” . . . . I have not only the obligation but the right to talk freely about those things and make proposals and concessions . . . . I’m more concerned about the process. (CCG 6/2/10)

“Right, Michael,” Karen added, “This type of thing could very well [be relevant] for any one of us sitting around the table for the next 6 months, and I don’t want this to be elevated to that ‘he said, she said’ in front of OSBT” (CCG 6/2/10). The following section discusses what happened at that the next board meeting.

**Interpreting the Representative Issue(s)**

When the OSBT convened for its June 2010 meeting, it did so to a full house. As explained above, the OSBT meeting, and the topic of the CCG being on the board’s agenda, were scheduled before the SNR conflict “started” the previous month. Addressing that issue, however, became the focus of discussion at the June meeting. Following an update on the CCG process by OSMP staff, the meeting turned to the “CCG midcourse review” (MCR) and to controversies surrounding the SNRs. This section of the chapter discusses how the public perceived the efforts at communication and outreach by the SNRs. Because the discussion among OSBT members at the MCR meeting was general, and it was concerned with containment of the damage of the SNR conflict rather than with resolution of different ideals about representative roles, I do not comment here on the board members. Instead, the following
section reflect on the OSBT’s understanding of the issues when it met for a retreat later that same month. The central issue raised and/or addressed by public speakers at the OSBT meeting in June concerned the outreach and communication processes of the Neighborhood representatives. The meeting that night, however, could have been much different if Scott had not resigned his CCG seat, 5 minutes into the agenda item.

Acknowledging that the CCG Ground Rules adopted by the OSBT precluded CCG members from speaking with OSBT members about the CCG, the president of the board opened by “inviting” (Briggs, OSBT 6/9/10) neighborhood representatives to make a statement about the recent SNR conflict and issues that it raised. After addressing some of that history and his interpretation of it (discussed below), Scott told those gathered:

I spoke with my wife, and she asked me, “Is this really—all the frustration—really worth it?” My first response to her was, “Are you kidding? Absolutely, of course it is.” Open Space is the very link around which we are held together as a community. That’s what we are. That’s our brand. It’s on the crest behind you. (Points to Seal of the City of Boulder.)... But as I thought more about it, I realized that the cost is very high for me. It’s just not the mudslinging with which I’ve been targeted or the dirty politics; it is that by letting a few folks... dominate my time, I failed a lot of other people. I failed all of the other thoughtful neighbors who want to have a voice as well.

I’ve looked at what can I do differently: What can I ask staff to help me with? What can I ask the facilitator to do to help me with? So we can get all the people’s input and synthesize it, come up with some ideas. But I’ve realized, at the end of the day, will it work? That, to me, is an unanswered question. I fear that these few vocal, half-a-
dozen folks, are going to continue to target me and may continue to target this CCG, [and] undermine a process that they are afraid may bring change they do not like. For that reason, I here and now resign from this CCG.

It pains me greatly to reward bad behavior and dirty politics. It pains me to know that there will no longer be an experienced trail designer sitting around the table that is designing the flagship trail system for Boulder and our mountain backdrop. Mostly, it pains me to know that other, thoughtful, solution-oriented neighbors—thousands of them—living in the neighborhoods, will now have a more difficult time making their voice heard as a small cluster gets another notch on their [sic] rifle stock.

Hopefully, I am wrong. I hope that is not the case. Perhaps with my resignation, [SOS] will back off, step down, and let the process work. (OSBT 6/9/10)

Scott covered a lot of topics in his statement. Most pertinent to the present discussion is how, throughout the statement, credence was not given to the us–them binary between conservation and recreation categories. Instead of “us” versus “them” in terms of conservation and recreation, the SNR conflict was recast as being between “a few . . . half-dozen folks” engaged in unethical behavior that threatened the CCG, and the thousands of remaining stakeholders, who, in contrast, were “thoughtful, solution oriented.” As Scott presented the problem, the people protesting Scott (and Guy) were not targeting those individuals but the very ideals behind the CCG, and, by extension, the values of the Open Space community that had created the CCG to manage the land—“the very link around which we are held together as a community, what we are . . . [and] our brand.” Even in his absence, Scott claimed, critics were liable to engage in further action to “undermine the process that they are afraid may bring change they do not like.”
Finally, Scott concluded by noting his unhappiness that, after his resignation, “there [would] no longer be an experienced trail designer sitting around the table that is designing the flagship trail system for Boulder.” From Scott’s position, not having a trail designer on the CCG was a problem for the CCG and for the Open Space community, because good trails are not “blazed” but designed, engineered, and built to rather exacting standards, given multiple variables (see Chapter 5). Scott, in effect, was claiming to represent a certain knowledge that the CCG required to do its best work, an expectation that the entire community should hold for the CCG, and his critics had deprived the community of that good work.

At the CCG and community level, Scott’s reasoned critiques, for the most part, seemed unheeded. After the MRC meeting, although critics were quieter, there was no effort on their part to take a more community-spirited position or to offer much else but opposition. The failure to change relationships to the CCG might have stemmed from the fact that, in the end, efforts to replace Scott at the CCG table led to Guy taking the seat. Because Guy’s proposal had sparked the SNR episode, critics had not accomplished their stated political goals; in fact, as discussed below, those critics actually damaged their standing in the community, among CCG members, and with the OSBT.

It can be imagined that those critics’ goal was destruction of the CCG, itself. In that case, the results were mixed. The CCG remained standing after the MCR, but outside pressure against “recreation” interests on “conservation” grounds by “neighborhood” stakeholders had strained relations between the caucuses, if not their individual members. The first 9 months of the CCG had been about learning and relationship building (which did not go so well), and as the group began to focus on the policy work, the SNR conflict arose. The CCG process, its
members, and Open Space stakeholder relations writ-large, never recovered, but all parties soldiered on. There was, after all, no going back.

In closing this part of the CCG’s story, it also should be noted that Scott’s statement did have at least one immediate and concrete effect: Upon his resignation, critics decided not to speak that evening. Of the tens of people in the hall, many of them armed for the expected rhetorical fight, only six spoke during public comment; among that number, only one addressed the SNR conflict directly. Immediate history would suggest that little new information would have resulted from extensive public comment on the SNR charges and countercharges, and that public comments that night could have further damaged community and CCG member relations.

In one of the most surprising events of the entire CCG, Art, the Central neighborhood representative, spoke to the board at the MCR following Scott, saying that he was “disenchanted” with the CCG process (not with the group members per se). Art’s disenchantment, in part, occurred because “certain neighbors will not be satisfied until they hear their message as the sole position from the neighborhood reps; they cannot tolerate the existence of any other position” (OSBT 6/9/10). As strong as those words were, they were afterthoughts to Art’s principal concern: “I have become disenchanted. It is my growing perception that the Board of Trustees are not supportive of the CCG. I’m resigning from the CCG effective immediately” (OSBT 6/9/10). In the following section, I discuss how OSBT members discussed issues raised by the SNR conflict, as well as by Art’s concern.

**Representative Roles and Representation**

A few weeks after the MRC, the OSBT met for a more private conversation during a daylong retreat, a large portion of which was set aside for addressing—or at least talking about—CCG issues. Formally a public meeting, attendance at the retreat was sparse. All CCG members
were invited, but only Ray and Karen were present. Heather also was present and actively involved in the discussion about the CCG. At the retreat, staff provided a lengthy overview of the CCG (one that was much more detailed and self-reflexive than what had been presented at the previous MCR meeting), and the board spent approximately 2 hours discussing the CCG, covering a wide range of topics.

Among the lesser issues discussed was “process fatigue” (i.e., discussing how the CCG would function) among CCG members, and OSBT questioning of the flow of CCG meetings and the process as a whole. The major issues discussed were those raised by the SNR conflict, and related question about roles and responsibilities of CCG members, the staff, the board, and the public as formal or informal representatives. The following sections, organized by roles in the CCG process (e.g., members or public), discuss how the board defined representation.

**Formal Public Stakeholder Representation**

During the retreat, OSBT members discussed issues of representation regarding CCG representatives, but that conversation was not a new one for the board. Members picked up the thread of CCG representative roles where they had left it dangling in August 2009. That fact came to the fore of the board’s conversation in a unique case of changing representative roles in the community during the CCG. [FN: Shelly becomes OSBT member after CCG] As the conversation at the retreat turned to how CCG members were expected to communicate with their constituents, a board member noted:

I think we had this conversation about reps. I think we actually had some conversation about the connection to the constituents. I think we had proposed a closer link, and a fair number of folks in the community said, “Wait a minute, that’s impossible, we cannot do
that.” I thought we backed away and said, in fact, “You get appointed, it can be your responsibility and your best judgment.” (OSBT 6/26/10)

“I believe it was citizen Isaacson who promoted that ideal” (OSBT 6/26/10), Dean of OSMP staff interjected. “Citizen Isaacson,” at the time of the retreat, was “Open Space Trustee Isaacson,” and he was the speaker cited in the quote above. Mr. Isaacson went on to tell the story by which the existing CCG representative–constituent relationship, in part, through his efforts, was constructed, adding to understanding of how that relationship structured the CCG’s membership:

The original proposal for the reps to serve as a go-between reporting the position of their group was something that [Mark O.] said I will not serve that role. So I was very, since I was in the Climber Caucus at the time, I was very attuned to what exactly was the definition of the role [of CCG representative] . . . . I was very focused on the distinction and that history. (Isaacson, OSBT, 6/26/10)

Topically, the board’s discussion was pretty narrowly concerned with the definition of Neighbor stakeholders and the role of Neighbor representatives, the same questions that were discussed but not resolved the previous summer. With a part of the CCG experience now behind it, the OSBT’s discussion at the retreat was more informed and reflective than that of the previous year, but it came to similarly loose conclusions and vague directions to the staff and the facilitator about going forward.

To be fair, at that point in the CCG, there was little that could be done to correct the situation with neighborhood representation, as the relational mold was cast. The following sections discuss how, from the perspective of board members, the mold was forged. In terms of representing stakeholders, the central point of the board’s discussion below is that the
name/boundary affixed to a stakeholder group is consequential in defining the role of representation, because that name structures what is and is not in stakeholders’ and representatives’ domain. I present the OSBT’s discussion about the stakeholder boundaries, followed by discussions about definition of roles.

**Stakeholder boundaries.** When the physical dimensions of a constituency are discussed in traditional liberal-democratic ideals of governing, boundaries are drawn in relation to populations. In the United States, such discussions occur at least every 10 years, when Congressional districts are assessed in light of new census data. In the case of the CCG, the physical boundaries of Neighbors were not defined by populations or interests but by issues foregrounded and/or lost if one or the other boundary of membership was adopted. During the retreat, the boundaries, themselves, were commented on only once, in a brief statement from a board member that got little attention. As the board member recounted:

Way before this CCG started, we, as a board, took a field trip . . . literally walking along the periphery of parts of the West TSA actual boundary, and the neighborhoods that were along the boundary, and we had a lot of discussion of what neighborhood issues needed to be reflected in the CCG process. Maybe I’m wrong [but] I think that my impression was that we were very focused on very adjacent types of issues, [but] then the geography got drawn so broadly for what constituted a neighborhood . . . . I’m worried about our initial worry, that we had as important before this started, about concerns and reactions that we get from the people who are pretty adjacent to the West TSA. (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)

Highlighting a problem with how the Neighborhood Caucuses were defined at the outset of the CCG process, an OSMP staff member responded by nothing, “What you’re talking
about—things went from immediate adjacency to say west of Broadway at some point” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10). “At some point” was as close to the moment of redefinition of Neighbors as one could get, as the change was made based on input from the board given at a public meeting but not discussed in public once it had been altered. In other words, the purpose of defining the Neighbors one way over another, the issues that different definitions foregrounded, and the interests of Neighbors never were discussed very long in public before the CCG began.

At the MRC meeting of the OSBT, a member of the public noted that “the wedge issue of mountain biking has distracted from the goal of what the Neighborhood Caucus was about” (Reynolds, 6/18/10). However, a survey of the Open Space community would have revealed that the meanings of “Neighbor as varied as those seen during the SNR conflict. Dean told the board at the retreat, there is “a divergence of opinions, and this is what that divergence sounds like” (Pashall, 6/26/10). The problem with the divergence of opinions that about the category of Neighbor, was that there was little effort to define within the CCG process what were the neighborhood issues, or how those issues should be attended to by Neighbors and their representatives to the CCG.

Having been in the room with the CCG, OSMP staff members were aware of differences between Neighbors and Neighbor representative about Neighbor issues, but as a staff member explained:

If we had not had neighborhood reps, I think we would not have been as likely to have heard [complaints] until it was way late in the process . . . . We had neighborhood reps and we still found it hard for the neighborhoods to hear everything. Without them, we would’ve been in real trouble. (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)
The things to be heard by the CCG, of course, were opinions and ideas about important issues related to the WTSA. In relation to Neighbors, the lack of clear boundaries for the category meant that what was a neighborhood issue also was similarly undefined. A Neighbor living near Broadway, for example, had a different relationship to parking and trash than did a Neighbor whose home bordered Open Space, or was near a popular trailhead. The absence of a definition of neighborhood issues, however, perhaps, is besides the point, as Neighbors, however the category is defined, were not a single-issue constituency, or held a single opinion on any of the issues affecting neighborhoods, and even less so about how a neighborhood issue could be defined.

There is reason to assume that the geographic and population size of the Neighbors category led to so many different interpretations of neighborhood issues and interests, but it is only a guess, and one that I expect additional evidence could quickly invalidate. Even if limited to adjacent neighbors, there would have been little agreement about issues affecting Neighbors, and interests at stake for Neighbors. In short, the impact of naming Neighbor issues, although not to be overlooked, becomes significant, principally, as it intersects with the role of representation of Neighbor interests. With respect to representative roles, the confluence of boundaries and issues concerning how people at the table understand issues, how that understanding did and did not reflect those of constituents, and how representatives performed their roles in-between personal understanding and constituents’ interpretations is where the board focused during the retreat.

**Representative roles.** On the heels of the SNR conflict, board members were demonstrably on guard about what they were saying about the question of Neighbor representation. A board member, as he was speaking, made the aside, “we believe—please don’t
record this—that” (unknown, OSBT 9/26/10). Another member began a statement by saying, “We might want to talk about it at the risk of making it worse” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10). Even OSMP staff were not interested in discussing the issue, saying that it was the board’s prerogative. In spite of reservations, two relevant items received attention at the retreat: (a) the definition of neighborhood representative’s roles in relation to bringing ideas and proposals to the CCG, and (b) how neighborhood representatives acquired information and ideas from their constituents.

The first issue picked up where the SNR conflict had placed the question, with Dean reminding the board that “there were comments that dogs and bikes were not neighborhood issues; well, they are, in fact, neighborhood issues, and mightily so” (Pashell, OSBT 6/26/10). Where CCG managers were coming down on the question of the role of neighborhood representation with respect to discussions at the CCG table, in Dean’s words, was “nuanced.” Elaborating, he explained that

if the neighbors raise the concern about the impact of the bike proposal that’s on the table, I think the neighborhood rep has a responsibility to at least reflect that conversation that they’ve [sic] heard and bring back to the table the conversation. . . . You cannot separate dogs and bikes; you cannot say they’re not neighborhood issues but I don’t think you put a [dog or bike] proposal on the table from a neighborhood representative. That’s the distinction we’re trying to draw. (OSBT 6/26/10)

OSMP’s position was sensible enough, but, as a board member said, “Mark M. is not limited to presenting bike ideas” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10). There was, in other words, an issue of fairness that needed to be considered in how different representatives were permitted to perform their role. For example, the same board member noted that “the new rep we had for
cultural resources was more interested in dog, bikes, and trails than he was any other [issue]” (unknown, OSBT 6/24/10). More important, as another board member explained, there still was the outstanding question of “substantively, what are the topics we want the neighborhood reps to be focusing on . . . . We talked about that last time and probably did a bad job of it” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10).

Board members did not have a lot to say about the role of neighborhood representatives at the retreat, and none of what they did say influenced the CCG; both were serious shortcomings. To understand why that issue, which seemed to affect only the SNR, is so important, it is necessary to step back and consider the position of the Neighborhood representatives, as structured by the CCG design. In other words, stripping away all of the history and relations that produced conflicts over the role of representatives, the important question is what the structural features were that contributed to the SNR conflict, and the neighborhood representative’s nearly impossible task of speaking for Neighbors.

The SNR conflict was based on different understanding of Neighbor interests in relation to the “non-Neighbor issue” of bikes. As Scott noted in his resignation speech, “There are a mile-wide range of views” (Gordon, OSBT 6/9/10). Representing the diversity and often-opposed interests of Neighbors always was going to be a challenge for the CCG, but the final design added to the problem by leaving individual members of that group responsible for managing representative–constituents communication. Of all the stakeholder categories named in the CCG process (e.g., conservation and recreation), neighbors had the least shared meaning of their interests and no formal representation in the Open Space community prior to the CCG.

In the face of the challenge of formally speaking for the varied interests of Neighbors the CCG’s design was finalized in a way that left the newly elected members (embattled, in the case
of the SNRs) to manage communication with their constituents. Because Neighbors were defined as the thousands of residents occupying the 10 square miles of dense residential housing west of Broadway, in front of the WTSA, scattered properties south of the city, and mountain homes on Open Space’s western boundary, performance of an ideal Neighbor representative simply was impossible. The problem, it seemed, was not that the Neighbor representatives were unwilling to attempt the impossible but that little help to do so was offered by the board or by OSMP.

“Neighborhood reps have had too big a job with little to no support,” Art told the board at the MCR meeting. Continuing, he explained that in addition to gathering neighborhood feedback without an established communication channel, as other groups have, it felt like we are expected to do what I believe should be OSMP’s job—that is, publicizing the West TSA process. Too often, we’ve heard from people who don’t know the processes going on . . . . There’s no way the volunteers should be on the firing line when someone says they did not know about process. (OSBT 6/24/10)

The OSBT was not unaware of the problem, Art noted that, in part, the OSBT, itself, had created. As a board member explained at the retreat:

We set a different standard for them [i.e., Neighbor representatives] because you have a better line of communication with the climbers group, some of the conservation groups, everything else. There is not that kind of a natural caucus in the same way there is . . . . and we created a higher expectation. It’s harder in two ways. One, there’s a lot more outreach that needs to happen, and a lot more listening. (Unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)
Another board member made a similar comment by noting that “we appreciate how
difficult the neighborhood CCG job is” (unknown, OSBT 6/24/10). Although cognizant of a
problem, it is not clear in the board members’ talk or actions that they understood the full scope
of the Neighbors representative’s task, as outlined above. The same board member quoted
immediately above, for example, continued by noting that he left the MCR meeting “feeling that
maybe we hadn’t clarified their job well enough . . . . Just in that one meeting, we heard several
different opinions about what the neighborhood reps should really be doing” (unknown, OSBT
6/24/10). The problem did not seem to be the definition of what the representatives should be
doing but the means for doing those things.

The remainder of comments about neighborhood representation from board members
during the retreat related to a functional description of “what the neighborhood reps should really
be doing” (unknown, OSBT 6/24/10). The primary question was stated by a board member as to
what “extent do the neighborhood reps have to gain some kind of consensus of their caucus”
(unknown, OSBT 6/24/10). Respondents to the question answered similarly. One member of
the board favored a representative role, where

proposing, from my standpoint, you propose whatever you think best serves your
neighborhood interests . . . They ought to be able to really represent what they think is
best for the overall sense of the community. (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)

Another argued that

some degree of independence judgment has to be relied upon; that you say I have heard
this range of information [and] I’ve engage them on this issue. I think what the real
concerns is . . . . I think they have gotta be able to show they’ve reached out [to
constituents] and that they have used that [information gathered] to make a reasonable decision. (unknown, OSBT 6/24/10)

**Decision-maker Representation**

At the MCR meeting, Art ended his statement as he had begun, with a critique of the board’s role in the CCG process. In the future, Art explained, “I’m looking for a closer relationship between trustees and the CCG. I believe that separation and the inability of one group to communicate with another has caused some problems” (OSBT 6/9/10). Scott ended his statement on the same point, noting that, to succeed, the CCG would “need your help, board . . . . Your process needs you to stand up again, as you did in October, and staunchly guard it by supporting staff and the remaining reps” (OSBT 6/9/10). Given the stress placed by both speakers on the issue, and the actions they took that were predicated, in part, on their interpretations of OSBT involvement, the board’s conversation about the topic is particularly important. The board, however, did not give the question much consideration at the retreat; only one member raised the issue, asking Heather, “How do you think they [i.e., CCG members] feel about interaction with us or lack of interaction with us?” (unknown, OSBT 6/24/10).

It is worth pausing to note that, throughout the retreat, Heather was asked by the board to represent the views, opinions, feelings, and dispositions of the CCG and its individual members on all manner of issues. What was requested, in fact, was not possible; as Heather noted more than once, “they are, of course, not a homogenous group” (OSBT 6/24/10). More importantly, by asking Heather the opinions of the group and its members, the retreat continued to reproduce boundaries between the board and the CCG, neither knowing firsthand what members and the other body knew and experienced. In the case of what CCG members thought about interactions with the board, Heather said:
I have heard, for the most part, I think, most of them think that you do not dabble and your current approach is the right one . . . . For the most part, folks are okay with it, and I think frankly it’s the right way to go. (OSBT 6/26/10)

In addition to that assessment, she noted other opinions among the group, such as some members believing that the board’s minimal involvement to date “was too much” (OSBT 6/26/10), and the concern of too little board involvement. No one followed up on the response, the meeting moved on, and the CCG and OSBT never intersected again until mid-December, as the CCG concluded, and the two groups met for the first and only time.

Meanwhile, back in June, at the retreat, the board discussed at length the role and performance of the other decision maker in the process: OSMP and its representative(s) to the CCG. The board’s discussion was not the first time that OSMP’s role had come up during the CCG process; at an earlier CCG meeting, there was an attempt by a few members to vote OSMP off the CCG. At the retreat, a member of the CCG management team reviewed for the board the role of staff in the CCG, as defined the previous year. As he said:

There’s a reason we’re at the table. It was a very deliberate vision by staff in conversation with the board about what we are here to do. There are pieces of the work program that need to get accomplished in order for us to do our job as Open Space.

(Armasted, OSBT 6/26/10).

Underneath that overarching purpose, the speaker noted, were several themes: (a) allowing non-OSMP CCG members to drive the conversation, with OSMP being cognizant that its voice “has a lot of weight attributed to the things they [sic] say” (Armated, OSBT 6/26/10); and (b) providing the experience and technical knowledge to address “feasibility issues . . saying there is a problem associated with it, and this is what it is; not . . we cannot do that but we’ll
have to overcome or address this issue in moving forward” (Armasted, OSBT 6/26/10).

Additionally,

the whole thing behind this CCG was to say, “You can be sitting where we sat and maybe you’ll come up with new ideas, new approaches.” At least maybe [there will be] some increased sensitivity to what we’re up against and the difficulty of these choices . . . the challenges of multiple use management. (Armated, OSBT 6/26/10)

A year into the CCG, these were no longer abstract issues, the weight of which most immediately fell to the lone OSMP representative at the CCG’s table.

Although the topic of OSMP representation on the CCG was raised at the retreat by OSMP staff, it was an OSBT member’s direct observations of a particular CCG meeting (see Chapter 7 for a description of the meeting) that led to discussion of the issue at length by the board. “Watching that meeting, and some of the others,” the board member said, “I think . . . [OSMP representative] was, to be frank, he was pretty close to just vetoing some things” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10). “Originally,” he continued, “the OSMP reps were to be one among equals, but, now, they are sort of super reps” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10). Two other OSBT members contributed to describing what the board saw at stake in this issue. The first explained how

suddenly, from December [2009], from that very minimal role of OSMP reps, now we come to . . . a far more involved and director sort of role in this CCG deliberation. . . . Whoever’s sitting in that position, they [sic] are not really community, they’ve got OSMP and the board behind them, there’s the whole department; not all CCG reps are created equal. (Unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)
The other OSBT member said simply, “We [the OSMP representative] don’t want to be nonparticipants but we also did really want this to be a community decision” (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10).

Returning to the issue at the center of the conversation, board members’ observations highlight how the infrequent to nonexistence contact between the board and the CCG shaped this particular discussion about representative roles. Turning to the CCG members present at the retreat, a board member asked for their perspectives on the question of OSMP’s role at the table. Karen responded by saying:

I thought last night’s meeting was very different in both dynamics and in content than, for instance, the previous meeting . . . because we spent so much time discussing the Wittemeyer property . . . what we are now calling “Switcher” or “Swoosh” or something . . . Joe [the OSMP representative] had put on the table the meeting before, and we’re honing in on it, talking away at it. He became the source of information about what we’re talking about and took a much more dominant role in this week’s meeting than ever has before. (OSBT 6/26/10)

After Karen’s description, the specific events that began the discussion were not motioned again, save for Heather echoing Karen’s interpretation later in the retreat. The question that still remained for the board was whether any action should be taken to restate and/or refine OSMP’s representative role in light of events and the board’s discussion. Heather suggested that engaging CCG members on another issue of process would contribute to their already noted “process fatigue,” but said that she was willing to raise the subject with the CCG if the board thought that it was necessary to do so. The board did not, perhaps because of Ray’s and Karen’s contributions on the matter. As Ray noted, “I haven’t found anybody at the table
shy enough” (OSBT 6/26/10) to be quieted. Karen told the board, “There’s nobody really there at the table you’re going to shut up” (OSBT 6/26/10). The following section looks at the people outside the group, who would not be shut up either.

**Informal Stakeholder Representation**

The SNR conflict existed because of different interpretations of Neighbor interests and the role of representatives among the Southern Neighbors Representatives and their constituents. Although those differences never could be completely reconciled, throughout events and discussions reported in this chapter, there was frequent mention of a lack of information getting to Neighbors about the CCG. Complaints about communicating with neighbors sometimes were presented as if more information about the process would have resolved the conflict, if not the underlying differences of opinions about neighborhood interests. However, during the retreat, OSMP staff and OSBT members highlighted the reality that the representative–constituent relationship was a *relationship*. In other words, members of the public should be playing roles as informal representatives, bringing information and proposals to their CCG representatives. The conversation at the retreat about such topics was not long but it touched on challenges related to both public awareness and public participation in the CCG process.

Often, in the process discourses of the CCG, efforts to connect the public to the CCG were presented as if such processes did not exist in any form. The CCG public information campaign was demonstrably ineffective at engaging the public in the CCG process, but it did exist and it evolved as the CCG evolved. For example, signs announcing the CCG Caucus Meeting were posted at trailheads (sometimes in the middle of a trail) prior to the event, notice was given about the CCG in the local newspaper, CCG/WTSA e-mail lists were established, a website was erected (and then revised), OSMP sent hundreds of notices directly to Neighbors,
and, with staff support, the Neighbor representatives to the CCG hosted two “Neighborhood Listening Sessions” that were attended by many Neighbors (and, probably, some non-Neighbors). Although OSMP staff, the OSBT, and consultants could have done a better job of facilitating communication between neighbors and CCG members (and the public at-large), it was not as if they did nothing.

OSMP staff were criticized by both CCG members and members of the public for their efforts to connect neighbors to their formal representatives on the CCG, but perhaps more than inaction on the staff’s part, sometimes, the looseness of CCG’s public communication infrastructure allowed parties to make false claims about OSMP staff (and other parties) efforts. For any number of reasons (e.g., information decay or forgetting, and political strategizing), parties in direct relation to each other, were not fulfilling their role as responsible stakeholders in relationship, in the opinion of OSMP staff and the OSBT, in spite of the information that was being provided.

At the retreat, Dean provided one of the best examples of how spaces between CCG members’, OSMP staff, and constituents allowed the latter to skirt responsibility, even when matters were as serious as they were during the SNR conflict. Reflecting on those issues, Dean told the board how the president of a home owners association whose members were vocal opponents of the SNR proposal regarding bikes (if not the representatives, themselves), told him that she had never heard of the CCG. “I went back to their notes,” Dean explained. “They [the notes] explained and talked about [the CCG], and it [meeting notes] was actually written by that individual who said they never heard about [the CCG]” (OSBT 6/26/10).

Awareness that a participatory process is occurring is the first step to constructive engagement in the process by members of the public, but once engaged, the question remains as
to how stakeholders can or should participate in such processes. Neighbors protesting the SNRs proposal did so in highly destructive ways to the CCG and to representative–constituent relations, as well as to broader relations between members of different stakeholder categories.

During the midcourse review meeting of the OSBT, a board member told the public to “stop asking the board to tell the CCG what to do. . . . People [need to] talk to their representatives, trust the process, and let it run its course” (Isaacson, OSBT 6/9/10). Another added that

the neighborhoods have woken up . . . once they’ve gotten riled up and they start paying attention . . . and start looking at the other issues, and they start talking about parking and what social trails should be there in the neighborhoods among themselves, they’re beginning to have interesting rich conversations that will ultimately, hopefully, get brought to this CCG. (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)

Technical questions about how to bring constituents, representatives, and the CCG into closer contact, however, were in short supply. Focusing on the SNRs, a board member suggested to

try and challenge [neighbors] a little bit to say, “Don’t just wait for Guy to come up with something and snipe at it the whole way to the CCG . . . flesh out what you think is fair based on folks in your neighborhood and give that to Guy, give it to this CCG upfront, so we can shortcut some of the dynamics. (unknown, OSBT 6/26/10)

Although having constituents sending proposals to representatives was a good idea, it required a substantive and presently lacking infrastructure to facilitate communication, the absence of which may have led to different neighbors bringing competing positions to the CCG, which it then would have been the formal representative’s role to represent equally. It is not clear how Guy, or another representative, could have fared better in his role under those
conditions than he (and others) had in the absence of such constituent direction; one side or another always would feel that their positions or proposals were getting less support from the representative, whose role was not to reflect opinions but to make decisions in light of competing interests. Again, discussion at the retreat, although full of fine-grained details at the level of critique and ideals, was thin on concrete suggestions concerning how to bring the public to the table in constructive ways. In the end, as a result of the events reported in this chapter, nothing about the CCG member–public interaction was altered, nor were structural alterations to improve understanding of roles and responsibilities made.

**Conclusion**

To be a representative is to perform a role, and although disagreements about the role of representatives have long existed, measures of representatives’ performances always are based on how well their speech and actions reflect or work in the interests of their constituents. Contemporary conditions of liberal democracy define the constituent–representative relationship in formal representation geographically, and, therefore, the constituencies that representatives serves are objective entities. Under that structure, representatives may have different ideals than their constituents, and constituents may disagree with how they are being represented by their representatives, but the formal constituent–representative relationship is not contested. In public processes, such as the Community Collaborative Group, representatives speak for stakeholders, a term that defines the boundaries of the constituency as subjective, and the symbolic interests and the issues in which those interests are significant, and the constituency is assumed to have shared interests in the issue that define the members as stakeholders. In many cases, that definition of constituency may be sufficient; in other cases, however, such as the Community Collaborative Group representatives for Neighbors, objective geography and symbolic interests may intersect,
leading to constituent–representative relationships in which a single category does not reflect a shared interest, or even common definitions of the issue(s) a stake. If not managed constructively by all parties, the conflict concerning who representatives do and do not speak for, and how that role is performed, can threaten the perceived legitimacy of the participation process.

Many issues related to the role of representatives and the boundaries of constituency were illustrated in the events described above, and many more are hidden in details that are not reported here. Among omitted elements of the story was how conflicts over meanings and issues of Neighbors, and the performance of Neighbor representative(s), was not just a matter of Neighbors distrusting their representatives but how that distrust led some Community Collaborative Group representatives to distrust the Neighbors. What comes to the foreground in the story of Neighbor representative–constituent relationships is the need for clear definitions of the representative role, the constant management of the information across the group (e.g., Community Collaborative Group) boundary, and for regular interaction between different parties to a process, such as the Community Collaborative Group. Neighbors in vocal opposition to their representatives during the Community Collaborative Group viewed those representatives as not properly representing their interests, and, by extension, as failing to fulfill the role of Neighbor representative to speak for “all Neighbors.” Neighbor representatives, of course, had a different perspective, and when the Open Space Board of Trustees discussed the issue, yet another ideal (actually, several ideals) were presented. It likely is an impossible goal to ensure that all stakeholder constituents in a representative–constituent relationship, such as that of Neighbors, define the ideal of representation similarly but standards or mechanisms can be created that, at least, might mitigate the chances of destructive conflict. Ensuring that
information provided to the public is complete, accurate, and timely is a minimal condition, but the need for direct interaction between various parties to such a relationship is the only way to protect the participation process from information gaps and the opportunities for political manipulations afforded by those gaps.

Among the many possible stakeholder interactions that might be created to close the distance between different parties to the process, none, perhaps, is more important than that between the people at the table and the decision makers. On most questions in this report, a soft stance is taken towards evaluation of the Community Collaborative Group’s design and process, but on the question of decision-maker participation, the evidence overwhelming demonstrates that a lack of oversight and engagement on the part of the Open Space Board of Trustees was not helpful to the process, and that decisions by the board created a division where none should have existed. The rationale for separating the Community Collaborative Group from the Open Space Board of Trustees is sound enough, as the board did not want to be seen as controlling the process, and because the board was not in the room with the Community Collaborative Group, it should not have been attempting to direct that group’s deliberations. Providing space to a participation process to do its work should not, however, come at the cost of proper oversight. The Open Space Board of Trustees, generally, has a light hand in management of the Department of Open Spaces and Mountain Parks, but the Community Collaborative Group was not normal Department of Open Spaces and Mountain Parks planning. Not only was the distance of the Open Space Board of Trustees from the Community Collaborative Group a liability for its members’ understanding of the group, as evidenced by the conflict over the Neighbor representatives, but that distance provided space for disgruntled stakeholders to use the board to attack the group, and it prevented the board from offering its knowledge and perspectives to the
group. In process, such as in the Community Collaborative Group, a decision-making entity, such as the Open Space Board of Trustees, has a lot to offer stakeholder representatives, constituents, and the process, itself, but caution must be taken to limit attempts by a powerful actor, such as the Open Space Board of Trustees, to prematurely intervene in policy or relational disputes, and to their credit, trustees recognized that fact and structurally defined the as being board outside of the Community Collaborative Group process. By failing to assume responsibility for the process, the Open Space Board of Trustees could not be responsive to problems in the process, nor could it be very much engaged in resolving those problems.
Chapter 6 Notes

1 Issues and interests are not the only additional conditions necessary for understanding the performance and assessment of representative roles; relations, politics, and other aspects also are important factors in the definition and interpretation of representatives’ roles. Such concerns, however, are not foregrounded in this chapter but are in other sections of this report.

2 U.S. federal government properties, or, more specifically, the organizations on those properties (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Institute for Standards and Technology) were not neighbors, as defined during the CCG. That is, they were not represented on the CCG, and they did not seek to collaborate on issues that affected their property. During the CCG, U.S. government organizations operating on federal land that was near or part of Open Space were consulted by city staff when questions touching on their property arose. Positions of the federal laboratories on questions affecting their land were equivalent to a CCG Sideboard; there was little to no negotiation about access to and approved uses of such property.

3 There were complaints about the Northern Neighborhood Caucus similar to those of the southern neighbors, but not as strongly expressed, and there were few to no charges levied against the Central Neighborhood Caucus.
CHAPTER 7
REPRESENTING STAKEHOLDERS

The primary purpose of participatory processes is to change the theory and practice of formal political representation, or who is speaking for who about public questions. The question of representation is the root of the participatory critique of existing governance, as well as the site for transformation of relations of governance. As noted previously in this report, representation has been the topic of some discussions in participation theory and practice, but those conversations are limited to questions of identification and selection of representatives; the performance of representation has been a sorely underresourced topic. Reasons for the lack of attention to representation in the study and enactment of participation are tied to many of the topics addressed in the prior chapters (e.g., the assumption that interest groups can/do represent stakeholders), but the most important factors, perhaps, are the lack of an adequate theory of representation and the absence of situated study of representation in participation processes. Participation processes might very well be the ground from which new ideals and enactments of representation are created, but to cultivate those theories and practices, closer attention to how stakeholder representatives perform representation is demanded.

After the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) Community Collaborative Group (CCG) midcourse review (discussed in Chapter 6), the camps involved in that fight retreated somewhat, and CCG members, although still operating in that contentious environment, worked in relative quiet. In July 2010, 10 months after its first meeting, the CCG began to engage in its primary
task, as defined and guided by the *Visitor Master Plan (VMP)*: identifying on-the-ground plans for the WTSA. The conversations during this phase were different in two ways from all others examined in this report. First, without interference/distractions from the external environment, the CCG settled into somewhat predictable ways of discussing policies. The regularity of the CCG’s discussions meant that communicative practices began to repeat themselves in noticeable ways; from such regularity, interpretive patterns can be identified/constructed. The second unique aspect of the deliberative phase was that, for the first time, CCG discussions were relatable to practices of representation in relation to policy questions, as opposed to questions about definitions of categories and who represented stakeholders. Close examination of the CCG’s deliberations during that period revealed that representatives’ representations of constituents, of course, were critical and widely performed, but that the people at the table also claimed and ascribed other forms of representation to themselves and others (e.g., representation of each other, other constituents, issues, and the group).

This chapter summarizes the CCG’s 6 months of deliberative talk, during which group members most explicitly performed their role(s) and responsibilities as stakeholder representatives. The breadth and complexity of the CCG’s policy conversations means that only a sliver of those discussions can be attended to in detail here, and that a narrative format would be far too cumbersome to employ as an analytic tool. This chapter, therefore, presents a summary narrative of the CCG’s deliberations, followed by a discussion of types of stakeholder representation that were identified in the transcribed speech used to reconstruct the narrative. Analysis of the transcripts challenges the traditional idea—one that also finds traction in stakeholder theory—that representation, first and foremost, is a role-based relationship between an agent and principals (or representative and constituents). That claim is supported in two
sections below. The first section discusses general varieties of representative claims and ascriptions that were present in CCG members’ talk. Three types of stakeholders are shown to be primary subjects in claims and/or ascriptions of representation: stakeholder constituencies, representatives themselves, and the collaborative group as an entity. A fourth category of “other” is used to group claims and/or ascriptions of representation that were made less frequently. The second section examines the general types in more depth to explain how CCG members made claims and/or ascribed representative qualities to their speech and/or to that of others, to represent their constituents, themselves, and other representatives’ constituents.

A Stakeholder Deliberation

After two rounds of Individual Plan Proposals, the CCG reorganized its conversation along geographic lines, with the remainder of the group’s planning work attending to segments of the WTSA landscape, moving from the northern to the southern areas. As the CCG discussed each section of land, overarching questions arose, with some being more significant than were others. Those issues that were most significant concerned uses of the land (as compared with overarching infrastructure questions), and several of them were deemed so significant that they required separate conversations. In those ways, the CCG’s final process structure was defined. (Note that the “final structure” was emergent throughout the deliberations and was not fully formed until the CCG was completed.) Within that evolving structure, the CCG’s discussions attended to each geographical section, leaving discussions of system-level matters until later in the process.

As each geographical section of the WTSA was discussed, options that did not receive agreement were recorded, with the CCG intending to circle back to those issues during final negotiations. The CCG decided that bikes, one of those system-level issues, would have a
specific and distinct CCG meeting towards the end of the options development phase. Issues about of dogs, another system-wide concern, eventually, was attended to by a subgroup of CCG members working separate from (or in addition to) CCG deliberations during final negotiations. The narrative below tells aspects of each of those tales, and, in doing so, covers the entire length of the CCG’s deliberative discussions and final negotiations. The story also covers the entire geographical scope of the WTSA. Finally, the story’s central events are highly contrasting and reflective of each other, making them diverse and comparable conversations from which to extract/name types of stakeholder representation under different conditions, such as topics, history of the group, and other forces that acted on the CCG.¹

The remainder of this section summarizes details of those conversations in the sequential order that they occurred, providing background for understanding the analytic sections. Reconstructed from complete transcripts of four meetings, this description is general, compared to others in the report, providing a picture of the discussions but not reproducing its turns for analytic–interpretive attention.² In the first part, I describe what was called the “Wittemeyer subarea” and how, through a series of questions and responses, a vague idea expressed by a CCG member was contributed to by other group members to produce what some CCG members called a “win–win” (or collaborative) proposal called the Swoop Trail. The second part looks at a follow-up discussion of Wittemeyer and Swoop Trail, showing how a number of questions left the “win–win” proposal dying a death of a thousand cuts. The third part presents events from the CCG’s meeting on bikes, describing its similarities and differences from other CCG planning discussions. The last part returns to Wittemeyer and the Swoop Trail during the CCG’s final negotiations, focusing on how tangles that were left dangling several months prior were wrapped up into (but poking out of) a final agreement on the proposal as it became part of the systemwide
“dog package.” After recounting those events, the chapter discusses forms of formal and informal representation that were performed by CCG members during those conversations.

**The Wittemeyer Property: “We Call it ‘Secret Spot’”**

Within discussions of the WTSA subareas, at no time during the CCG process was there uniformity to the form of introduction, deliberation, or final decision on a given proposal; instead, ideas were thrown out, picked up, lost, beaten back, and otherwise raised and attended to in myriad ways. One constant of proposals forwarded throughout most of the CCG, however, was that they were presented as declarations that things should be one way or another. The proposal that came to be called the “Wittemeyer and/or Swoop Proposal” was unique in that, perhaps, it was the only proposal that did not come to the group more or less fully formed; instead, CCG members “collaborated” to develop the recommendation. Once it was formed, CCG members treated the Wittemeyer/Swoop proposal similar to most others that the group considered—in very adversarial ways. In the beginning, however, everyone agreed, or so it seemed, about what to do with Wittemeyer/Swoop.

A broad mass of western-facing slope with a steep drainage in the middle, the Wittemeyer property is the backside of Mount Sanitas, one of the most popular summits in the Open Space system. The Wittemeyer area contrasts sharply with the eastern public face of Mount Sanitas. Whereas the latter is heavily used and well worn (and was well before Open Space acquired it), the Wittemeyer parcel is lightly visited and still fresh in appearance. As more than one CCG member explained, the vegetation, wildlife, degree of invasive species (e.g., weeds), views, use levels, and other natural and social factors of the Wittemeyer visitor experience were special, because “we don’t have very much left in the system” (Dooley, CCG 5/3/10). Without saying that all Open Space should be used like Wittemeyer, there was broad
consensus among CCG members that the Wittemeyer property was an ideal example of Open Space. At the first mention of this area, Mark M. told the group, “We call it ‘Secret Spot.’ I can’t believe we’re talking about it” (CCG 5/3/10).

More than any other factor, the “secret” of the Wittemeyer property results from the difficulty of accessing the land, with only three routes into the area existing at the time of the CCG. The first route were social trails located several miles outside of the city off a two-lane canyon road to nowhere special, with limited parking. The second route was the summit of Mount Sanitas, a 1,200-ft climb in less than a mile. If either of those entries were taken, the exit was at the opposite end, with the long road back to town or the decent down Mount Sanitas awaiting. The only other access was through private property. Hence, unless one was a direct neighbor (or a swift runner), even a simple out-and-back visit to the Wittemeyer property was a commitment of several hours. Runners, however, do make that trip regularly, which, perhaps, is why Peter first forwarded to the CCG an idea about use of the land.

Peter’s idea began vaguely, when he suggested “to designate some way to get to the top of Mount Sanitas back here” (CCG 5/3/10). That thought led to a discussion about existing conditions, such as who uses the land how, what trails existed, and the state of natural resources on the property. After some back-and-forth discussion about such details, Joe R. asked, “Can I just clarify what Peter said is- I think what you’re really thinking is the most important is getting from Sunshine Canyon to the top of Sanitas” (CCG 5/3/10). “From here, to here” (CCG 5/3/10), Peter responded, pointing to a map of the location (see Figure 7.1). Joe explained that OSMP wanted to remove existing social trails to protect the habitat, CCG members wanted continued access for their constituents, and the people living near the area needed to be considered.
Figure 7.1. The Wittemeyer/Swoop Proposal. Mapping of roads (green), social trails (purple), drainages (blue), and designated trails (yellow) by OSMP (OSMP Google Earth map available here: http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&id=7252&Itemid=2781#DOWN). Swoop trail (red) overlaid by author. Source: Base image Google Earth.

“Is it possible,” Joe asked, “to serve all of those needs—the neighbors, the habitat block size, and the two destination points—with a single trail?” (CCG 5/3/10). A line, similar to the red one in Figure 7.1 was drawn on the map. “Can I call it the ‘Swoop Trail’?” Johannes inquired, coining a term that never was adopted by all CCG members. What here is called the Wittemeyer/Swoop Proposal came into existence, in the preceding manner. At the end of the discussion about the proposal that night, there was no open dissent to the proposal; individual members apparently were content with a “swooping” trail up the mountain that provided general public and neighborhood access, and, simultaneously, established a large and healthy block of pines, grasses, and wildlife. Excited about their work, before the next meeting, nearly half of the CCG members hiked the Wittemeyer property.

Speaking of Wittemeyer: “Did We Talk about Dogs?”

A week after the CCG first talked about Wittemeyer/Swoop, the CCG midcourse review meeting occurred. One week after that meeting, the CCG convened again, beginning immediately with further discussion about the Swoop proposal. Heather opened the conversation
by asking if members had “any additional thinking from being on the land, having talked to your people about the idea?” (CCG 6/2/10). How much constituent–representative communication about the Swoop proposal had occurred was not known but several CCG members noted that they had visited the area to assess the idea. Group members came to the second discussion with thoughts about the proposal, in general, and in relation to specific issues in the area that they had noticed in their hikes.

For a little less than an hour, CCG members raised and discussed concerns about Wittemeyer/Swoop: neighborhood disturbances, parking, safety, desire for loop hikes, the state of nature on that land, and whether users would stay on the new trail, among other issues. There was no logical, orderly progression in the discussion from topic to topic; the conversation whipped from one concern to the next, up and down between area-level issues and specific segments of trail, and from wants and needs to objections and alternatives. Within the chaotic first part of the discussion, three major themes—the class or type of trail to be constructed, the blurring of management zone types, and the question of whether visitors would use the new trail—appeared as significant points of disagreement.

The OSMP trail standards within which the CCG’s discussion about trail classes on the Wittemeyer property was grounded were discussed at length in Chapter 5, with some general differences in people’s understanding of the discourse demonstrated. During the CCG’s second discussion about Wittemeyer/Swoop, those categories of trails and construction standards were further interrogated, and the discourse about them was further muddled. To keep traffic on the trail to a minimum, OSMP proposed a “class 0” trail, which Peter thought meant that it would not receive maintenance and, therefore, was problematic. Joe R. indicated that “we are misusing the term ‘class 0’ . . . we are hybridizing it somewhere between class 0 and class 1” (CCG
6/2/10), but he was bit off from the technical aspects of a class 0 trail. Upon request, another OSMP staff member told the CCG, “The class 0 would still receive maintenance at appropriate level. What it really means is that [the trail] would not show up on maps” (McFarland, CCG 6/2/10). Not mapping the trail was a bit of a contentious point; as Mark M. said, “Keeping it off the map, I really kind of question that because this is our property and our trails . . . . Our goal here is not to make things more difficult for users” (CCG 6/2/10).

Mapping also intersects with the issue of management zones, policies that some CCG members saw the Swoop proposals as violating by restricting access to off-trail use in a Natural Area. The Swoop proposal was a trail, as Peter said, to get from “here to here.” The purpose of the proposed trail alignment (i.e., where the trail was on the land), however, was forwarded by Joe R. as a means of creating a large habitat block, by eliminating fragmentation due to existing social trails. That tradeoff was the essence of the “win–win” proposal that the group heralded at the end of the preceding meeting. Protecting the habitat, however, meant two things. First, it meant not increasing use in the area, which keeping the trail off maps would contribute to doing. The second was a total closure to off-trail use of the interior of the area for an unspecified period of time—“a period of years” (CCG 6/2/10), Joe R. said—such that the land disturbed by social trails could be reclaimed. Guy, and other CCG members, interpreted the closure as turning a Natural Area into a Habitat Conservation Area (HCA), even a “super-HCA, where even off-trail access is not permitted” (Burgess, CCG 6/2/10). As would occur time and time again during the CCG, other group members were quick to point out that the VMP allowed increased protection measures for special resources in Natural Areas, if deemed necessary or desired. “The need we’re deeming here,” Joe said, “is this is the largest contiguous bloc of Ponderosa Pine forest
remaining in a healthy stand in the Open Space department” (CCG 6/2/10). Guy chose not to press the matter, commenting only that “it’s still a big change” (CCG 6/2/10).

Finally, both of these issues came down to a single question: Will users stay on the new Swoop tail and out of the closure, allowing reclamation and less disturbance to the plants, animals, and earth in the interior? As the proposal stood—with just the one trail up the mountain side—there was disagreement about its prospects for success. Some members thought that having access points only miles out of town and at the summit would not lead to the elimination of social trails through the interior; the argument was that people were going to take shortcuts up the drainage, leading to the existing trails not being reclaimed.

Some parties wanted a “connector” trail to be built at the edge of the closure near the road, which, incidentally, is about 20 feet below the land, itself. In addition to making the goal of closure successful, advocates of the connector trail, which would have paralleled the road and connected with the Swoop west of the city, noted safety concern as arguments for the trail. Parties not in favor of the connector were relatively silent on the question of the connector at that meeting. Soon after the topic was raised, Beverly introduced questions about dog policy for the area, with the subject dominating the remainder of the conversation. Although the CCG discussed the connector only briefly, it would return again as a major sticking point in the final discussion on Wittemeyer, at which time, the connector became entangled in system-level issues related to dogs. After looking at the CCG bike meeting, those topics are returned to in the section on the CCG dog package meeting below.

On the Bike Question: “They Shoulder the Blame”

Throughout Summer and early Fall 2010, the CCG continued discussion on the remainder of the WTSA subareas. As noted previously, some issues, such as dogs and bikes,
were deemed to be best addressed at the level of the entire WTSA. With respect to mountain biking in the WTSA, the CCG decided to have a dedicated CCG meeting on the topic. The CCG mountain bike meeting was held in September 2010, as the CCG was about to begin discussions on the southern-most subareas of the WTSA: the grasslands from which had sprung the fierce struggle over the Southern Neighborhood Representatives earlier in the year.

In addition to being a separate meeting on a WTSA-wide issue—as opposed to discussing an issue in the context of a specific subarea—the meeting about bikes was unique in other respects. First, the venue and audience were different than most CCG meetings. Hosted at the East Boulder Senior Center, where the CCG caucus meeting (and a few CCG meetings) were held, the bike meeting was attended by more than 100 people, most of whom had become familiar faces throughout the CCG process, but who were not regulars at CCG meetings. Second, the format of the meeting was different than usual, with Mark M. providing a somewhat formal presentation of his proposal for a mountain bike trail in the WTSA, the CCG discussing the proposal and issues, the public then commenting, and the matter returned to the CCG for final action. Interaction among CCG members, at first, was slightly affected by this changed format and venue.

The way that the room had been set up for Mark’s presentation, CCG members sat with the general audience during his talk, side-by-side and two rows deep. When Mark finished, instead of moving to the table where they could look at a map and discuss things, CCG members immediately attempted to start a discussion from their seats in the audience. It took some time, but, eventually, Heather got the group to the table, explaining that
I would prefer you don’t actually sit there and talk to the back of each other’s heads but come up here and talk about actual lines on actual maps and actual areas. That would make me feel like you were having a more productive conversation. (CCG 9/13/10)

Mark’s proposal, which Heather characterized as being developed “in consultation with [Mark’s] constituents,” was for a north-to-south trail, starting at about the middle of the WTSA; “almost always at the very eastern edge of the system” (CCG 9/13/10), as Mark explained (see Figure 7.2). East to west, the proposed bike route was squeezed in-between an existing trail—a long traverse called the “Mesa Trail”—and the neighborhood boundaries of Open Space. In between those guides were all manner of concerns. The proposed trail would begin at the most popular and populated trailhead in the system, confront geological obstacles just south of that access point, then intersect with federal government property, move past many residential houses, and, finally, make a long run around the southern grasslands. The last leg of the trail was the “backyard” of Save Open Space members, whose opposition to such a proposal was discussed in Chapter 6.

Figure 7.2. The Bike Caucus proposal. Note: Green line is the primary proposed bike route, yellow lines are existing designated trails, and tan lines are options in the proposal; no explanation of blue or red lines was available. Source: Mark McIntyre.
For an hour or so, CCG members had, as Heather called it, “a CCG conversation” (CCG 9/13/10). The discussion bounced from proponents’ representations of bikers as “underserved users” seeking a minimal request of “just one trail” to opponents citing environmental concerns and user conflicts as a result of “increased fragmentation,” “user displacement,” “crowding,” and “incompatible uses.” Proponents countered by stating that much of the land eyed for the trail already was seriously affected by existing users, that building the new trail would reduce fragmentation by eliminating redundant social trails, and that user conflict “is not the huge player that the extremist make it out to be” (Grey, CCG 9/13/10). After some back-and-forth discussion that seemed to only frustrate all sides, the public was invited to comment, with most of those statements simply adding fuel to the contentious conversation.

Following public comment, the CCG returned to make a final decision. That talk tumbled on in the same manner as the preceding hour, leading Peter to eventually ask:

Is there anyone in the room [at the table] who is, “No mountain biking over my dead body?” If that is the case, we ought to just go home. I think we’re talking about the wrong stuff; we should be talking about, is there something here that you all want to protect or not? (CCG 9/13/10)

No one directly responded to Peter’s question. Beverly, however, later would say that there was “an inherent conflict . . . [in the proposal that] what is good for the neighbors is bad for the natural resources. I think that is going to be the rub here” (CCG 9/13/10). Interestingly, the mountain bike meeting was one of the few meetings where CCG representatives made explicit and sustained mention of their constituents’ perspectives. The Conservation Caucus, with its members in the position of defending their stance that there not be a mountain bike trail in the WTSA, referenced their constituents most frequently. Karen, for example, told the group that
if there was something attractive to take back, we’d be willing to take it back and engage in further discussions with our constituents, but at the present time, what we’ve heard from them based on what’s on the table now, it is not acceptable. (CCG 9/13/10)

In the end, the mountain bike meeting concluded with a declaration of nonconsensus on the bike issue, and the OSMP took over the matter, per the CCG Ground Rules. Before the meeting, closed, however, Michael had something to say:

I believe it could have been done, and I believe that the onus for not getting it done in any way has got to rest on the shoulders of the Conservation people, who are very principled people and represent very committed people who are very concerned about the environment, but, nonetheless, they shoulder the blame. (CCG 9/13/10)

Quick in her attempts to blunt sharp criticisms among CCG members, Heather told everyone gathered that “in many of your conversations, there is enough interesting behavior to go around. If we’re gonna start casting stones, everyone is going to get hit a couple times, myself included” (CCG 9/13/10).

**How about . . . ?: “No”**

In the last weeks of the CCG, after the group had completed work on each subarea and members were considering their recommendations as a “package” of system-wide proposals, the group revisited the Wittemeyer/Swoop Proposal. Use of Open Space by people with dogs was a system-wide issue addressed during that part of the CCG, and the proposal forwarded by an ad hoc CCG Dog Subcommittee included a “no-dog” recommendation for the Wittemeyer/Swoop trail and no position on the connector trail. The CCG’s discussion about those proposals began tensely and only worsened. Just a few turns into the conversation, Ray responded to a comment from Ned (spoken by Ned’s alternate in his absence) that captured the tone of the meeting:
That [no dogs on Swoop] is really a critical part of the dog package . . . . If Ned insists on bringing that—whether he’s here or not—if Ned insists on making that a deal breaker, he’s probably going to have to go to nonconsensus. (CCG 11/9/10)

Heather had other thoughts, commenting to someone during a break later in the meeting that “if they don’t get this one, it’s over” (CCG 11/9/10).

There were two issues troubling the CCG on the question of dogs and the Swoop. First, supporters argued that the Wittemeyer property was surrounded by neighbors with dogs, and those people and pets had been using the area for years, with little noticeable impact on the land. CCG members who did not support no dogs on the Swoop trail held that the CCG should not restrict those people’s “historic access.” As Mark M. noted, “The logic of saying ‘no dogs’ here but you have private homes and dogs here quite close; I don’t get the logic” (CCG 11/9/10). No dog “here,” Mark added, would have “turned [Wittemeyer] into a de facto HCA” (CCG 11/9/10).

Opponents to dogs on the Swoop were not long on their augments; mostly, they took positions that were similar to Ray’s (given above) and simply said “No.” From previous meetings, however, positions of opponents to dogs on the Swoop were known to be of two types: one concerned issues of environmental conservation and the other was a condition of the VMP mandating establishment of more no-dog trails for the enjoyment of those who would rather not encounter dogs. Without denying the environmental impacts of domestic animals on wilderness, the desire to hike without dogs was what was at stake for supporters of no dogs on the Wittemeyer property.

Matters, however, were not as simple as dogs or no dogs on Wittemeyer/Swoop. The CCG Dog Subcommittee had forwarded to the CCG a package of proposals that could not easily be amended without cascading effects. Karen gave a strong pronouncement concerning the
integrity of the package. Using a name for the dog proposal that had been coined by Heather, Karen explained:

This Big Kahuna package has many things in it which I absolutely oppose. I am not saying this is a package that will unravel; not only is this a package that will unravel if parts are picked out of it but if we go back to ground zero . . . there are some things that I will argue like hell for that are not in this package but I feel very strongly about. (CCG 11/9/10)

The second issue about dogs on the Swoop had nothing to do with whether dogs should be allowed but, instead, was concerned about the connector trail. As reported above, parties that wanted the connector considered it to be an issue of safety, conservation, and necessity to reclaim the social trails running up the mountain side. Peter most strongly and directly stated the position as supporters saw it: “The point of the whole Swoop or the Perimeter Trail is to consolidate all those social trails” (CCG 11/9/10). Opponents of the connector, in contrast, were ambiguous about their reasons for opposition. For instance, as Ray explained:

We talked about that quite a bit back in the day, and there was a lot of public testimony. The other end of the proposed connector is a private drive, which there is a lot of safety issues there, there’s a lot of property issues there. There is access for fire equipment and ambulances, and we can’t just say that we can build the trail there because we did not solve those problems. We went by them because were not easily solvable. (CCG 11/9/10)

In addition to issues noted above by Ray and Peter, Karen, at one point, blurred a lot of issues by speaking for what she understood were neighbors’ concerns: “I understand that private landowners along there are vehemently opposed to the connector. . . . In my mind, the private
landowners concerns are about the natural resources and about private access” (CCG 11/9/10).

It was at that point, more or less, that the discussion began to go off the rails. There was broad agreement among a majority of CCG members, including members of the Conservation Caucus, that the connector was a good idea for safety, environmental, and management purposes, but, however, there were holdouts. As the connector trail was further discussed, the “win–win” Wittemeyer/Swoop Proposal was turning into something so much less.

Guy was the first person to introduce the idea of blocking the dog package, but not because of opposition to the connector. The objection that Guy raised was in response to a proposal to trade construction of the connector for another trail that was several miles to the south, called (by CCG members) the “Fall Line.” In arguing about the connector, some opponents had made the demand that if the connector went in, the Fall Line had to be “no dog.” Guy, the representative for neighbors in that area, explained that this position was “almost something I’d be willing to block consensus on” (CCG 11/9/10). Noting that the OSMP would have preferred to close the Fall Line trail, Joe R. told everyone, “I think the dog package is worth walking away from this trail, and I say that, as I said, with gritted teeth” (CCG 11/9/10). A quick retort was illustrative of the remainder of the CCG’s conversation, with Karen asking, “Do you want me to list all that I walked away from?” (CCG 11/9/10). A stalemate of sorts had been reached, and the CCG, for only the second time in nearly 18 months, took an unscheduled break.5

After the break, coming full circle from the original Swoop proposal, Karen framed her position as “not based on conservation rationale; it is based purely on horse-trading” (CCG 11/9/10). To complete the dog package, Karen would consent to the connector only if the opening of the interior closure was tied to compliance with on-trail requirements, as defined by
the VMP. The standard for such compliance was established in the VMP at 90%, but there were technical and political problems with measuring compliance. On the technical side, Joe R. noted, “I don’t have a tool, and I cannot build you one tonight” (CCG 11/9/10). With respect to politics, as Joe explained:

I’m really very, very concerned about putting . . . monitoring requirements into any agreements we make. It’s very troublesome. It’s a heck of a lot of staff time, and that work is always open to varying interpretations of the data. This is a troublesome piece to add-on . . . . I’d have to walk away. (CCG 11/9/10)

An unproductive conversation followed about why OSMP staff could not measure compliance, which brought the VMP, itself, under criticism. As the discussion (and the CCG) circled the drain, Ray noted that “the VMP is defective in its standards for no dogs” (CCG 11/9/10). Karen followed up by saying, “It sounds like the VMP is not any more a Sideboard.” (Keep in mind that Sideboards were inviolable rules, many of them legal texts.) A few moments later, Peter declared Karen’s proposal for compliance monitoring to be “a deal breaker . . . . It is totally unfair and irrelevant to all other users. I cannot accept it” (CCG 11/9/10). Chuck followed Peter’s lead, and the dog package (and, perhaps, the CCG) teetered on the edge.

Karen relented, the dog package (with the connector and no dogs on Swoop) passed, and the CCG survived another day. It would not, however, be the last, or even the most dramatic, time that the group walked up to the edge, if not over it. Those stories are told in the following chapter; the remainder of this chapter reports types of claims and ascriptions of representation contained in the preceding conversations.⁶
Stakeholder Representation Claims and Ascriptions

Grounded in the conversations from the four meetings that were summarized above, the analysis presented here attends to CCG representatives’ representative claims and ascriptions at three levels. First, a summary of types of claims and ascriptions identified across those meetings is presented. The second part takes a closer look at CCG members’ representations of their constituents and caucus group, representations of other caucus groups and their constituents, and representations of individual CCG representatives (i.e., self and others). Although these types of representative claims and ascriptions are distinct, there can be significant blurring or blending of them. The analysis of those conservations initially was guided by Saward’s (2010) typology of representative claims (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim to represent</th>
<th>the interests</th>
<th>of a person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim to embody</td>
<td>the needs</td>
<td>of a group of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim to stand for</td>
<td>the preferences</td>
<td>of a country or a region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim to symbolize</td>
<td>the true character</td>
<td>of nonhuman nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Saward (2010)

The third section moves beyond representations of people (as well as nonhuman nature) to intersections between representation and policy. Extant discussions of representation typically center on control over the voice of the representative in the abstract. In practice, however, representations claimed and ascribed, mostly, if not always, contain reference to an issue of collective importance; and, during the CCG, there was a degree of movement in formal and informal claims and ascriptions of representation based on the issue at hand. Deserving more attention than can be given here, the final section opens but does not resolve questions about representation in light of issues, and proposals offered to address those issues.
General Varieties of Stakeholder Representation

The first thing to note from analysis of the CCG’s deliberative conversations is that Saward’s (2010) typology is a good starting point for examining representative claims and ascriptions in talk. Informed by, but not wedded to, forms of representative claims, as described by Saward, the analysis, not surprisingly, found that CCG members most frequently made claims about people and groups. Nonhuman nature also was strongly represented, but that is equally unsurprising, given the subject matter of the CCG. Significantly, CCG members’ representations included very few claims or ascription of country or region, interpreted, here, as the City of Boulder and/or the Open Space stakeholders. Country and region blur into group forms, but, for the present purposes, a distinction is maintained. Additionally, the formal–informal distinction that Saward drew is expanded in interesting ways by analysis of CCG members’ talk. For example, during the CCG, formal representatives of one caucus sought to represent constituents of another caucus with informal representative claim. At times, however, the formal–informal distinction was strained, such as when a formal representative (i.e., an alternate) formally representing another formal representative informally represented the first person. Admittedly, an exemplary outlier, there was no shortage of messy formal–informal representative claims and ascriptions during the CCG.

Where Saward’s (2010) typology reaches its limits is when mixed formal and informal forms of representation intersect in the concrete with the people, processes, and products of governing. At that point, representative claims are not limited to people and nonhuman nature but include symbols, the material world, and immaterial processes, such as communication and relations. In the end, however, all representative claims and ascriptions circle back as representations of people and nonhuman nature, as nothing else has independent interests.
Exploring that circuit will be necessary to make fuller sense of representative claims and ascriptions in the world.

Table 7.2 lists the principal varieties of formal and informal representative claims and ascriptions that were identified in the CCG meetings examined. Most of the content in that table is discussed in the following sections, and I do not define or comment on them here, to highlight some less prominent types.

Table 7.2

*General Varieties of Representative Claims and Ascriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituencies</th>
<th>General other-group constituents</th>
<th>General self-group constituents</th>
<th>General stakeholders</th>
<th>Specific self–group constituents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>Formal stakeholder representatives</td>
<td>Self as individual</td>
<td>Other stakeholder groups/representatives</td>
<td>Self stakeholder group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative group</td>
<td>Group as entity</td>
<td>Collaborative group’s discussion</td>
<td>Subgroups of collaborative group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Decision makers</td>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Constitutions, plans, and rules</td>
<td>Nonhuman stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposals</td>
<td>Public or community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undefined “we”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The supermajority of representative claims and ascriptions made during the CCG were informal, including each of those discussed here. Two types—claims and ascriptions about discourses and decision makers—already have been evidenced at length in the preceding chapters. Two additional types of representative claims or ascriptions—those of the CCG’s discussions and subgroups within the CCG—were not possible to represent until they were
constructed; consequently, their presence is weighted toward the later parts of the process.

Representations of CCG discussions overlap with representations of the group (my code for them was “group”), but references to the group, almost always, were about the group’s talk. Mark M., for example, during the first Wittemeyer meeting, told the group, “I want to make sure that we’re not spending a lot of time talking about on road traffic issues . . . [as] they are not CCG concerns.”

More regularly, representations of the group were about past talk. Shelly once noted that “we’ve avoided talking about this.” Beverly explained at the bike meeting that “we had this whole discussion on Witteymeyer,” and Ray reminded the group that “we talked about that quite a bit back in the day.” At the points in the CCG process that are examined in this chapter, Guy was the only person to ask group members to think about other representations of the group, saying, “We should think about how we explain the decisions that we are going to make to the public . . . . If we can make sense, that’s probably [a] good choice.”

Representations of subgroups (here, specifically, the Dog Subcommittee) were totally uniform, such that each speaker representing the subgroup made positive claims in support of the group’s efforts. Gwen, who was a member of the Dog Subcommittee, said that “we put together for 8 hours of open communication, honest communication, none of us were completely happy with every aspect of it; we thought it stood a good chance, and rightfully so, of been okayed by the CCG.” Note, again, the presence of talk about talk in Gwen’s representation of the subgroup, a description echoed in spirit and content by Michael, who also spoke about the subcommittee as a member. Mark O., who was not a member of the dog subgroup, claimed, “The Dog Subcommittee worked super hard on this thing.” Furthermore, with respect to representations of the Dog Subcommittee, all references to it were made as part of representations of each speaker’s
position on the dog package, with the rhetorical aim of getting the package passed. The Dog Subcommittee work, however, was represented in terms of CCG members as stakeholders to that work, an interesting example of how the category of stakeholder floats. The following section discusses how, as claim and ascription, the category of representative and the represented also floats.

**Representations of Constituents, Self, and Other**

Speaking for (i.e., in the interest of) people and nonhuman nature is the principal representative claim made by oneself and/or ascribed to others. Most scholarship on the subject representation, however, at best, considers only one form in which those representations occur: the agent represents principals (i.e., constituents) to other representatives. In addition to claims and ascriptions about principals, representatives can (and do) make claims and ascriptions about other representatives’ constituents, representations about themselves, and representatives make representations of other representatives. The latter two types of claims and ascriptions can be at either the personal level (i.e. the representative as individual) or the role level (i.e., the individual as representative). Additionally, as has been demonstrated in previous chapters, principals can and do make representations of representatives, both their representatives and representatives of other categories. Together, all of those representations constitute discourses of stakeholders through which are constituted meanings of individuals and groups, formal and informal representatives, and decision makers and the public. In short, if the strictures of role-based representation are rejected (in principle), practices of representative claims and ascriptions are multidirectional, compounding, and immediately consequential.

This section goes beneath the obvious conclusion that representation is more complex than extant literature portrays it to be to consider ways in which such complex forms of
representation are performed. Specifically, the following sections discuss types of claims and ascriptions made by CCG members of their constituents and themselves in CCG members’ role as formal representatives, as well as informal representations of other CCG members and their constituents that were made by formal representatives. The discussion follows in two parts, looking first at representations of constituents and then at representations of representatives.

The typologies presented below, it should be stressed, seek to begin a conversation about details of representative communicative practices, not to define the terms of such a dialogue. Not only are data from which these typologies were constructed limited to the CCG but even within that case, the few hours of talk examined are relatively limited. Little in the typologies is not supported by everyday experience and knowledge of political representation but much more study in multiple types of governing structures is required before claiming to have identified, in practice, stable types of representative claims and ascriptions of general value. Hence, the following discussion, although raising some interesting dimensions of representation, should be considered primarily an argument for continuing to explore communicative practices of representation at the level of talk.

**Representation of constituents.** Table 7.3 and Table 7.4, respectively, report types of formal representative claims and informal representative ascriptions concerning constituents of CCG members (i.e., formal stakeholder representatives). The two forms are categorized as: (a) *constituent-self*, where a claim to represent was grounded in formal representative roles, such that the speaker was speaking for his or her constituents’ interests, as those interests were defined in the CCG Ground Rules; and (b) *constituent-other*, where a representative ascription was made about interests of stakeholders outside the speaker’s formally defined constituency.
Table 7.3

**Representative Claims and Ascriptions of Constituents-Self**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| As I see it        | As a neighbor to Open Space if I lived here  
I think the neighbors would apparently like  
From the department standpoint                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Declarative        | The department is not okay with  
The neighbors really care about this  
The VMP is defective in its standards  
I know lots of people who  
A lot of the neighbors stopped using the trailhead completely  
Appreciate that there’s another place to park  
People come up, runners primarily . . . make a loop out of it, which is really nice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| She or he said     | Wearing a Buffalo Bicycle Classic shirt and his ears perked up  
I think that Beverly has accurately represented our constituents and their positions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| I hear             | Certainly something I hear from my constituents  
I have not heard specifics from people  
From my constituency, I hear both  
We have had pretty much 100% feedback from our constituents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| It’s my people     | Sorry, I’ve had neighbors bring these kinds of concerns to us  
From my monstrous, website . . . people really do not like the idea of looking over their shoulders  
Nobody in our constituency has said anything positive  
My constituency at the moment doesn’t care what I do  
I have my own constituency that would like to see far greater access  
I represent a lot of people who say hell no to mountain bikes  
It's a heck of a lot of staff time and that work is always open to varying interpretations of the data  
Very hard for me to be able to say that there is consensus support within the neighborhoods  
Neighbors have voiced concerns                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
Table 7.4

Representative Claims and Ascriptions of Constituents-Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Declarative   | The hikers there are neighbors
It’s somebody’s backyard
These neighbors are going to use this here, they have an understanding among themselves
Neighborhood people that live in the mountains they’re going to
How mountain bikes need to access now
The neighbors like this, they like having a trail that they access in their backyard; they like their private Open Space
Private landowners along there are vehemently opposed
I know that 98% of the people will be in compliance and do the right thing
We know that it is an underserved group |
| She or he said| She says, “Oh, I am opposed to that completely”
What people that came down from Sunshine [Canyon] said . . . .
Their concern was not with having the connector . . . get them out of my driveway |
| Rhetorical    | Your constituents, do they understand what it is that they’re giving up? |
| Logic         | Like that in the same way, I could say I really do not want people on the road that’s next to my house because that’s where my kids play . . . . I cannot say that because that’s a public right-of-way
Unfair and irrelevant to all the other users |
| As I see it   | In my mind the private landowners concerns are about the natural resources and about private access |
| General       | Can someone speak to the wildlife?
Probably exists for the people of upper Linden [Drive]
Ned, I don’t know how your constituents would feel
When we asked who are the neighbors, we got the same answer |

The first thing to note about the content of Tables 7.3 and 7.4 is the presence of declarative claims and ascriptions uttered without supporting information. In representing both their and other representatives’ constituents, CCG members expressed a great amount of certainty about their constituents and others in the community. One way in which such
declaratives often appeared in the CCG’s talk was in reporting/representing consequences of past management actions and implications of similar actions in the future. In Table 7.3, that way of claiming representation is exemplified by Shelly’s statement, “A lot of the neighbors stopped using the trailhead completely.” In contrast, declaratives of constituent-others also were offered without supporting evidence. The paradigm example of such ascriptions came during the CCG bike meeting, when Mark M. described those opposing mountain bikes in the WTSA as “fearing the other.”

There was, no doubt, truth behind both Shelly’s and Mark’s declarative representations, but without background information, the statements create a (nearly) homogenous image of their constituents and others’ constituents, which might then circulate in the public sphere, and which might then influence interaction and relations at the table and in the community at-large. Mark M. idealizes that process by casting nonsupporters of biking in the WTSA as engaging in stereotyping and prejudice, not rational arguments.

Looking closely at the declaratives in Tables 7.3 and 7.4 reveals a distinction in ways that CCGs members represented constituent-selves and constituent-others. Constituent-selves representations were those in which representatives claimed their constituency to be one thing or another, without a distinction made between the speaker and the represented. Joe R., for example, said, “The department is not okay with this.” As another example, Peter said, “Runners . . . make a loop out of it, which is really nice.” Declaratives representing constituent-others were not mediated through the representative but imagined by the representative, and generalized beyond meaningful reference to a group or individual that was being represented. In other words, imagined representations of constituent-others were those that made the speaker the ground for his or her representations of others. Imagined representations of constituent-others
included statements such as that made by Mark M. that “the neighbors like this,” and by Beverly’s claim, with regard to mountain bikers, “we know that is an underserved group.”

Another aspect across the Tables 7.3 and 7.4 is how representations of constituents were used to support speakers’ arguments. Not unsurprisingly, when CCG members made representative claims as part of their arguments for or against a proposal, there were more claims to constituent-self representation than to constituent-others representations. Table 7.3 lists several variations of the former type of representation under the heading of “It’s my people.” Among the strongest uses of this form of claim was the statement made by a member of the Conservation Caucus during the bike meeting that “nobody in our constituency has said anything positive.” That sweeping claim is both true and false. Under the definition of conservation preferred by people selected to represent conservation interests during the CCG, there was little support for bikes in the WTSA. However, seen in previous chapters, there were people who identified with another definition of conservation and for whom the bike proposal was a positive thing. The meaning of “constituency” here is something other than all parties interested in conservation; the rejection of bikes by a subset of people who identify as “conservationists” is used to claim that all conservation-minded parties do not only not favor bike but that they have nothing positive to say about bikes. Due to the absolutist tone of the claim, it only takes one example of a conservationist supporting bikes to show that the claim was not factual, and such examples are plentiful in this report.

With respect to representative claims of constituent-others for argumentative purposes, Table 7.4 provides an interesting example under the label of “rhetorical” that complements/contrasts the one discussed immediately above. As the dog package discussion became increasingly divisive, and the Wittemyer/Swoop Proposal seemed to be heading to
nonconsensus, Mark M. asked members of the Conservation Caucus, “Your constituents, do they understand what it is that they are giving up?” Again, the term constituents, although suggesting a reference to people identifying with conservationist, cannot be confined to a defined group, as conservationist means many things to many people. Mark’s question seems to be bringing different ideals of conservation to the fore, suggesting that people who identify with a meaning of conservation (even the definition that was accepted by representatives of the CCG Conservation Caucus) may not be as homogenous in their opinions as suggested by the voices at the table representing conservation. Mark’s question implies that the Conservation Caucus members had different ideals about conservation, which CCG Conservation Caucus members’ representative claims did not acknowledge. Additionally, and much more problematic for the relations constituted in claims of representation, Mark’s question suggests that Conservation Caucus representatives were not representing the perspectives of conservationists but only a segment of that category. In the most negative light, the question could be viewed as claiming that the claims of Conservation Caucus representatives were not representative of the Conservation Caucus members but of the most extreme elements of that category.

**Representing representatives.** Claiming and ascribing representations of representatives is a common practice in real-world governance among both formal and informal representatives. However, traditional accounts of representation as role have no place for such representations, and extant discursive approaches, although opening space, have not discussed the topic. Table 7.5 and Table 7.6, respectively, list types of self representations made by CCG members and representations made of CCG representatives by other CCG members. Representing self as representative and representing other representatives is a tricky prospect for analysis, as those claims and ascriptions, at least during the CCG, usually were embedded in
statements that were designed to accomplish something beyond speaking for or about a representative. Whereas self-constituents and other-constituents representations usually were about presenting an image of those people claimed or ascribed to represent, representations of self and other representatives were not of such uniform character. For example, the category of “I am” in Table 7.5 refers to CCG members’ claims about themselves as individuals, and, within that list, there is little common purpose to the representative claims that are listed. Mark M. noted in his presentation at the bike meeting that “I am a longtime community member” and that he was “out hiking with one of my fellow CCG members.” Both quotes are statements of fact, but in the politics of mountain biking in Boulder, supporters are seen as “newcomers” and there is little discussion about bikers as hikers, and vice versa. Moreover, as representatives of stakeholder categories, representatives contribute to the communicative construction of public meaning of their constituents. Mark’s representations of himself, therefore, were about representing the mountain bike community (such that it is) as members of the community (i.e., not the Other) with diverse interests in the WTSA and Open Space, including everyone’s shared activity of hiking and support for conservation.

Another example of the difficulty in representatives representing self is present in Michael’s statement, when he explained himself “as a guy who’s not really ignorant about nature and the environment.” Michael was leading up to a critique of the Open Space management zones and their boundaries, and his representation of himself as “not really ignorant about nature” constitutes a move that places him within a sphere of knowledge from which he reasonably can make a claim about OSMP management zones. Finally, Guy had an interesting representation of himself, explaining that “I might not block consensus . . . but this is almost something I’d be willing to block consensus on.” That comment came near the end of the final
discussion on Wittemeyer, with the cause of hesitation on Guy’s part being the lack of a connector. Perhaps the purest form of self-representation in the data examined, on the surface, Guy simply is stating his position, but there also is a degree of representing himself as reasonable, acting from conviction, not emotion.

With respect to representations of other representatives, the content of the examples is a little clearer and more explicit than are the self-representations. For the sake of comparison, the “He or she said” (i.e., reports what another representative said) in Table 7.6 can be thought of as similar to an “I am” statement in Table 7.5. So aligned, the sets, basically, are declarative statements, and with respect to representing other representatives, there is little ambiguity in the examples. Ray, for instance, made a claim, stating, “Peter does not want to do that, and Karen is saying that is the package.” Such statements are little more than reflecting back what had previously occurred. Similarly, the “he or she knows” type of ascriptions, which are representations of what others were aware of, point out relatively uncontested facts. Karen, for example, held that she was “sure some of you have seen the wildlife research transect signs” on the Wittemeyer property. That claim was coupled with the idea that if there is wildlife research occurring on the property, it must be that the wildlife there is important and should be protected. In this particular case, protection meant keeping dogs off the Swoop trail.
### Table 7.5

*Representatives’ Representations of Self*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I am     | I guess I am the department  
I am a longtime community member  
I am proposing  
Until I had $90,000 worth of surgery, I could not walk; the only way I could get into the woods was on a bike  
I am the lawyer, one of the lawyers  
I’ve often thought, as a guy who’s not really ignorant about nature and the environment,  
I do not want to be the holdup  
I’m very concerned  
I’m not understanding  
I might not block consensus... almost something I’d be willing to block consensus on  
For people live in the mountains, which I do  
I’m not crazy about it |
| I am not | I’m not trying to negotiate for  
I’m not going to change my stripes at this point  
It’s so far out of my hands |
| As I see it | If I lived here, I wouldn’t see it to be so bad  
I’ve never seen a tire track  
I feel, this is my personal opinion, my feeling is  
To me that’s a very significant problem |
| Disclosure | We drive to that damn trailhead, I admit it  
One day up there does not make me an expert  
I wasn’t particularly involved  
I talked to |
| Naming | I called the Swoop  
I’ll just call it “the trail” for short |
| Silence | I’m not going to weigh in  
(no talk) |
| What I said | The comments I made a month or so ago  
I really clumsily worded |
Table 7.6

Representatives’ Representations of Other Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S/he said</td>
<td>What I think Joe was saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chuck’s question . . . that is correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What James is talking about is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Karen is asking is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter does not want to do that, and Karen is saying that is the package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ned wanted me to speak about some of his thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ned has talked to some others . . . apparently, neighbors are accessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with their dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His doing</td>
<td>If Ned insists on making that a deal breaker, he’s probably going to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have to go to nonconsensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are</td>
<td>You’re dreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You keep saying that, but I’d like to see evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You guys are a bounty of knowledge and passion, and you’ve represented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>your constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t want your characterization to stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am surprised at your championing the neighbors concerns in this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>particular case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She or he knows</td>
<td>Peter knows I said it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am sure that some of you have seen the wildlife researched transect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illogic</td>
<td>Why do you want to piss off the horse people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am she or he</td>
<td>So that was Ned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although most claims and ascriptions about self and other representatives during the

CCG were benign, there were some in the meetings reviewed that indicate the relevance of such

forms for ongoing relations and governance. During the episode concerning the potential

negative consequences of the large habitat block on Wittemeyer, Chuck told Shelly, “You’re
dreaming.” Chuck, no doubt, was not being mean but the representation had overtones of
denigration. A similarly value-laden ascription was levied by Peter, when, to the group’s

amusement, he asked those advocating for no horses on Wittemeyer, “Why do you want to piss
off the horse people?” Stating a predictable outcome of a certain course of CCG action, Peter’s representation seems to suggest that those being ascribed are not being rational. Peter would later make that ascription directly, describing obstruction as “illogical.”

Finally, an important outlier (among data reviewed) was the “I am he or she” form of representing another representative, which occur when one representative speaks for another in a formal capacity, such as when an alternate to the CCG told the group what she or he knew about the primary representative’s position(s) on a question. There was only one such incident in the four meetings reviewed for this chapter, but the form, certainly, was one that extended beyond those data. In Table 7.6, the “I am he or she” example came at the end of a longer statement given by Joe Z. that claimed, at the end, “that was Ned.” This is a particularly interesting type of representative claim, and one that is much more relevant than its single articulation in the data reviewed might suggest (see, e.g., Chapter 6). CCG Alternate Representatives were important parties to the CCG process, and, in addition to representing themselves as acting representatives and the constituents being represented, they often were in the position of representing the primary representative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter showed that not only do representatives represent interests–identities of constituents (i.e., those people they claim or are ascribed to speak for/as) but that they also can make representations of their fellow representatives, as well as representations of processes of governing. Such labels and performances of representation can have significant influences on how different segments of a community relate to each other and to government. If representatives’ speech is intended to be, or is taken as, constituting meanings of the represented, one representative’s ascription of values to another representative and/or to him or herself can be
interpreted as views of that representative’s constituents about the representative and others. In that case, one representative’s criticism (or lauding) of another group’s representative can be taken as speaking for the whole of the first representative’s constituents, which, then, is understood as ascribing his or her meaning to the second representative’s constituents writ large. If one person’s speech can define meanings of groups and, thereby, structure intergroup relations, the implications for governing and community relations could not be starker. Similarly, representatives’ representations of governance and government can shape interpretations of a group’s relation to such processes and institutions, influencing how different groups interact with each other and with “the system.” That topic is taken up in the next chapter.
Chapter 7 Notes

1The idealness of data about the CCG’s plan proposal conversations from which narratives were reconstructed are neither chance occurrences nor due to deft selection on my part. Intensive temporal and conceptual mapping, guided by concern for relative generalizability of analysis, narrative coherence, and interesting events, led to selection of the Wittemeyer discussion. That discussion happened to get coupled, in the CCG’s final negotiations, with dogs. Bikes, and the bike meeting, as well as dogs, were topics that I did not seek to investigate, because positions on those topics in the Open Space community are so polarized that local discourses on the subjects, almost exclusively, are constituted in us–them terms of conflict. I was interested in more subtle forms of representation than talk about those subjects readily permits. (However, if either issue would have been looked at closely enough, cracks in prevailing discourses of us and them certainly would have been revealed.) The CCG’s meeting on bikes, originally, was to be included in this report because of the large number of public comments made at the meeting, which offered another perspective on representation, but space concerns led to the rejection of a discussion of public representations in the report. The bike meeting was not dropped from analysis, however, because it offered talk among the CCG at a point in time between the discussions of Wittemeyer, and, thereby, provided a more complete storyline.

2Data for Chapter 7 come from recordings of portions of CCG meetings in which the Wittemeyer/Swoop, and the total of the Bike meeting. The four meetings totaled 12 hours, and the full excerpts totaled more than 60,000 words. Initially guided by Saward’s (2010) typology (see Table 7.1), data were read closely for claims and ascriptions of representation. Once representative claims and ascriptions were identified in each transcript, their content was extracted from the full text. Two waves of further analysis followed. In the first wave, content extracted from the transcripts (12,000 words and 700 distinct claims or ascriptions) were coded for emergent forms of representation, producing the primary and secondary categories of representation. From that analysis, categories of group and members, constituents, and audiences were selected for closer examination. The second wave examined the smaller set (300 distinct claims or ascriptions; 8,500 words) to arrive at the types of representation discussed in Chapter 7.

3CCG members disagreed about the pronunciation of “Sanitas” with one group saying that it should be San-i-tas, another preferring Sa-ni-tas, with the second “a” being sharper in first version.

4Note that there is contrast between Mark M.’s naming of the Wittemyer property as “Secret Spot” and his protests about not mapping the Swoop trail.

5The first impromptu break of the CCG occurred during the bike meeting, under similar conditions that spurred the unscheduled break during the dog package meeting.

6As a matter of fairness in the author’s representation of parties to the CCG, it should be noted that there were times members of other caucuses took positions as hardened as those of the Conservation Caucus concerning dogs and Wittemeyer/Swoop. At one time or another, all the
representatives, or their caucus, took positions that were absolute or inflexible, even when those positions seemed to not be in the best interests of all stakeholders.
CHAPTER 8
CATEGORIZING STAKEHOLDER GOVERNANCE

Participation is discussed in the theoretical and practical literature as a process that, potentially, can transform individuals and their relations, with the longer term aim of participation being the redefinition of fair and legitimate governance. To sustain transformative governance, however, terms and discourses of governance also must be altered. As has been demonstrated in prior chapters, roles and responsibilities of “stakeholders” and “representatives” are similar to and different from existing forms of political interests and representation. Holding too tightly to definitions of “representative” and “constituents” that fit with existing forms of governance can lead to challenges for participation processes that may limit individual-level changes and, thereby, make structural changes difficult to achieve. Most statements about transformation of governance structures and processes tie those changes directly to the success of the practice of participation to transform individuals; discussions about governance terms are outside the frame of analysis and/or influence. The list of potential relevant terms and discourses not yet discussed in the literature, perhaps, is endless, but that list includes concepts such as “leader,” “deliberation,” and “majority rule,” in addition to representative, representation, and constituency.

During all stages of the West Trial Study Area (WTSA) Community Collaborative Group (CCG), there were, as has been shown in preceding chapters, conversations about governance terms. The most significant term that was openly discussed, of course, was representative. The
CCG process, however, created little space for talking about other terms that were significant to that participatory process, or governance, generally, and representative was discussed only because different uses and interpretations of that term could not be avoided. As the CCG process began to reach the critical moment of formal decision making (i.e., approval of the group’s proposals), the importance of governance terms/concepts became of great interest to CCG members, decision makers, and the public at large. Ideally, the CCG’s conversations about governance terms would have occurred during the planning and learning stages, and participants, subsequently, would have oriented their conversations to those definitions. Coming at the end of the nearly 2-year-long process, however, parties to the CCG sought to define operational terms in ways that would respect what the group had done. As result, CCG members (and others) sought to wrap symbols around events that already had occurred, but because there were significant differences in perceptions about what had occurred during the CCG, and how to define those events, those conversations muddied the theoretical and practical waters.

Focusing on three important moments in the CCG’s final phase of decision making, this chapter examines how CCG members sought to define terms of governance that would accurately represent to themselves, decision makers, and the public what had occurred during the CCG, and decisions made as a result of the process. The first section below considers how individual CCG members sought to categorize their “participation” and that of other CCG members, as members presented their (caucus) proposals to each other, and as the CCG discussed the group’s proposals with the public. The second and third sections in this chapter cover a single conversation; the last and, arguably, most important, discussion among CCG members. The second section focuses on CCG members’ conversation about terms that would categorize their work, and the place of that work in the WTSA planning process, as that process
returned to normal order in existing structures of governance. The third section discusses some issues related to terms organizing governance in-between the CCG process and the normal order of Open Space governance. Specifically, the final section examines how CCG members’ different interpretations of terms/concepts that were critical to the participatory process and to normal order influenced how some members understood the purpose of the CCG and the finality of the CCG’s decisions.

**Categorizing Participation**

The CCG began its final round of deliberations and negotiations in late October 2010, with what were called “Primary Package Proposals.” There was not much direction given to CCG members regarding the form of these proposals but, ideally, members were to integrate multiple interests of various caucuses into a package of proposals from the perspective of each caucus. Intersections and contrasts between those proposals were to serve as the ground for developing the “CCG Plan” that would be approved through consensus by the CCG and sent to the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) for consideration. This section discusses how CCG members discussed the preliminary plan proposals of their caucus and other caucuses at an October 2010 CCG meeting, and each caucus’s representations of the CCG’s Package Proposals at a “Preliminary Plan Open House” that was held in early December 2010. There were not enormous difference between the two events in terms of content or inflection of the CCG members’ statements but the immediate topic of the proposal(s) under consideration, as well as the physical context of the discussion, were different enough to warrant separation in this analysis.

The topic in the CCG meeting, as mentioned, was caucus-level proposals. At the Open House, the topic was the CCG’s tentative group proposals. Contextually, the CCG meeting
occurred in its usual location and with members in their ordinary configuration around the table, with a few members of the public present. The Open House was held in a large venue, CCG members were seated in a line facing the audience, and that audience numbered over 100, exceeding legal capacity of the space and leaving members of the public locked out (for a time). For all their differences, however, Heather’s comment at the conclusion of the October CCG meeting serves to frame both events. At the conclusion of members’ presentations of their package proposals, she told the group:

I will confess to you that that is not how I hoped you would use your time. . . . There is very heartfelt frustration, that most of you feel that you have been clear in your needs, generous in your overtures, and that those efforts have been met by others around the table with an inability to hear your preferences and an unwillingness to meet your generous proposals with generous proposals of their own. Once again, this might be a consensus point where everyone agrees that everyone else is not good at this; interesting, but not particularly helpful to us tonight. (Bergman, 10/26/10)

**Between “You” and “Me”**

Johannas, the hiking representative in the Recreation Caucus, also thought he saw a point of consensus in the package plans about the Wittemeyer property, discussed in Chapter 7. The Swoop trail proposal, he said, was “one example that stands out [as] a big win for all the parties, where I think we can and we should quickly reach consensus” (Ruldouf, 10/26/10).

Foreshadowing what actually would transpire during the CCG’s discussions about the Wittemeyer property (see Chapter 7), Johannas then turned to other subjects, highlighting that “in the Conservation Caucus proposal, we lose some top priority trails that we have identified in our proposal.” After listing the areas/trails, he then explained, “That’s a lot of trail closures,
valuable trails in terms of great user experience of loop hike opportunities and connections. We, as recreationalist, are supposed to give all this up? For what?” His voice growing tenser with each word, Johanns concluded by asking in harsh tones, “What are the conservationists getting for this? What am I, as a conservationist, getting for this? In my opinion, not much.”

Statements from the other representatives that followed differed in form, length, focus, and who spoke for a caucus, but, as explained below, two common themes were identified across all of them: self-group praise and other-group criticism.

**Self-group praise.** *Self-group praise* is speech that made contextually positive representations of the speaker’s caucus as reasonable, collaborative, fair, and even self-sacrificing. Michael, for instance, summarized his thoughts by explaining, “I think my proposal strikes a balance that may be somewhat unfair to the dog community, but I stand by it nonetheless” (Katz, 10/26/10). Mark M. explained that the “Recreation Caucus put forth what I thought was a modest proposal that involves a substantial amount of compromise” (McIntyre, 10/26/10). Mark O. wanted to be very, very blunt . . . . In the Recreation Caucus proposal, there was involved vigorous internal debate, and dispute and argument, in a healthy way to come to what we thought was a fair and balanced and reasonable proposal for the entire CCG, taking into account considerations that had been made by all of the constituent groups. (CCG 10/26/10)

Each of those Recreation Caucus members spoke before anyone from the Conservation Caucus spoke, and although, perhaps, not unsurprising, the critiques were not expected. Therefore, when Karen began the Conservation Caucus presentation, she interjected a self-group praise into the prepared text, hastening to tell everyone that “as we worked on our proposals—
over many long hours through many debates—we kept four overriding principles in mind” (CCG 10/26/10). Beverly also spoke for the Conservation Caucus that night, with her representations of the conservation group members seeming both planned and spontaneous. In describing her caucus’s position at that time on Witteymer, Beverly said that “in an effort to be collaborative, we would agree to this” (CCG 10/26/10), and, at another point, she held that “we feel like we've given a lot of new dog recreation opportunities.”

**Other-group critique.** *Other-group* critiques were representations that CCG representatives made about the lack of members of another caucus presented as reasonable, collaborative, and fair positions in its caucus’s proposals. Whereas all of the self-praise was not too laudatory (some was even defensive), intensity about other caucuses’ plans, and what those plans represented to individual members of other caucuses, existed on spectrum. At the mellow end was Ned, who encouraged those opposed to dogs on Wittemeyer to “please consider the fact that those neighbors need to have access to their Open Space, just like we do” (Patton, 10/26/10). Beverly’s critique moved up a notch, holding that “we’re kind of not getting credit for all the things that we did in the past” (CCG 10/26/10). Although making the longest and, at times, most excited critique of the evening, Suzanne (acting as an ad hoc horse representative), in the end, spent most of her statement pleading her case that OSMP

staff and Conservation Caucus members together proposed closing . . . 54% of all existing trails in the West TSA [Trail Study Area] to horses. No reasons were given other than that in their opinion . . . and they never asked us, they never asked us what we thought (CCG 10/26/10).

It was Mark O., however, who set the bar of other-group critique, explaining:
We were tremendously—I will speak for myself—I was tremendously disappointed, even devastated, to receive the proposals of the Conservation Caucus that involved, apparently, . . . no debate at all, and, apparently, no intention to compromise or come to a real consensus on anything of any significant importance. That is all I have to say. (CCG 10/26/10)

**Between “Us” and “Them”**

After introducing the caucus package proposals, the CCG engaged in several weeks of discussions and negotiations about ideas contained in them, as well as other topics. The previous chapter discussed a few of those conversations at length, as well as their conclusions. When CCG members, staff, and public (including OSBT members) gathered in December 2010 for the CCG Preliminary Plan Open House, the group already had progressed through those conversations. The CCG plan, as the title of the Open House suggested, still was tentative, with the group waiting until the last minute, literally, to approve its plan as a whole. In other words, although consensus was reached on parts of the plan, the plan then was subject to another approval in its final form.

The Open House discussed in this section was a time for the CCG to hear public comment on the draft/preliminary plan, which the group then could take account of in the final plan. As noted above, the Open House was an eventful evening, involving oversized crowds (see Figure 8.1), police action (due to fire code), and protests about excluding some of the public (due to lack of space), with at least one person labeling OSMP staff “Nazis” for preventing the overflow crowd from entering the building (because it would have been against the fire code). Inside the building, tempers were just as heated among the public, as well as among CCG
members; for instance, with respect to the public, when Ray was introduced as a Conservation Caucus member, there were hisses and boos from audience members.

![Figure 8.1. The Preliminary Plan Open House (December 2010). Note: CCG members are in foreground; participants in the meeting are looking at the speaker (page left). Source: Author.](image)

The Open House began with introductions of the CCG’s Preliminary Plan by representatives of each of the caucuses. As with the Caucus Package Proposals, discussed above, members of the various caucuses took different routes in their presentations, and the caucuses were represented in different ways, with some CCG members speaking for their caucus (e.g., the Recreation Caucus), and others speaking only for themselves (e.g., the Dog Caucus of the Recreation Caucus). There were, however, just as there had been at the package plans discussion, common traits of the presentation/representations that evening.

First, some speakers, as they had done previously, engaged in self-group praise and other-group criticism, but the number and intensity were far lower than had occurred at the caucus package proposals meeting. Michael, for instance, engaged in self-group praise when telling the crowd, particularly the “dog people,” that, “I’ve heard from many of you. I’ve stepped on toes, have made some enemies” (Katz, 12/6/10). Karen, for the Conservation Caucus, in a milder way, also praised her self-group, explaining, “We would have preferred not to designate trails in this area . . . but we agreed to new designations in return for habitat protection” (CCG 12/10). On the other side, Peter levied the harshest criticism from a CCG member at the Open House,
holding that “OSMP has been totally inflexible . . . and they [sic] haven’t really offered equestrians anything” (CCG 12/6/10). There also was a new theme in CCG members’ statements at the Open House: that of the caucus representatives’ representations of the preliminary plan.

The primary message that all CCG members who raised the issue of the preliminary package proposals, as Mark O. put matters, was that stakeholders “eventually get comfortable . . . [with] the preliminary plan proposals” (Oveson, 12/6/10). There was no expectation among CCG members that various constituencies in the community would unite over the CCG’s proposals, and the representations of that plan by CCG members appeared to be aimed at reminding the public, as Shelly put it, that “we could not all get precisely what we wanted but we all got some of what we wanted” (CCG 12/6/10). Johannes told the audience that “we are trying to strike a delicate balance here between lots of competing interests, and the name of the game has been trying to reach consensus between these competing interests” (CCG 12/6/10). Mark M., although noting “disappointment at our inability as a CCG to carry on discussing . . . mountain bike access,” did say, “on the whole, I urge you to support the agreements that we have reached” (CCG 12/10). Karen, for her part, said that “I can tell you that we do not like everything in these agreements” (CCG 12/6/10). In the next section, how the CCG members sought to resolve what they did not like in the agreements is discussed.

Language and Stakeholder Governance

The CCG convened for its final meeting in early January 2011, with an agenda to complete what could be completed. For several hours, the group resolved outstanding issues, addressed concerns raised at the Preliminary Plan Open House, and took account of OSBT’s feedback given at a study session in December 2010. During the immediately preceding 2
months, CCG members had been part of two lengthy CCG meetings, one or more CCG subgroup meetings that were independent of the CCG, the Open House meeting, and a study session with the OSBT. All of those gatherings occurred during a busy season for social events and family gatherings, and preparations necessary for both. CCG members, and those standing around them in support roles, had been at it for 18 months, enduring all that has been mentioned in this report, and more. Five days after the new year began, a roughed collection of CCG representatives and OSMP staff arrived for the end of the CCG (see Figure 8.2). Hanging over the process, but never asked aloud, was the question, whether the CCG would succeed in its minimal and essential goal of reporting out a consensus plan. A response to that question, when all was said and done, hinged on meanings of the words “consensus” and “plan,” as well as meanings of things unsaid.

![Figure 8.2](image) The final meeting of the Community Collaborative Group (January 2011). Source: Author.

This section tells the story of the CCG’s final hour, during which CCG members sought to make sense of what they had done by constructing definitions/categories of symbols representing that work. More important, from a practical perspective, as shall be seen, were questions about what was not said during the CCG, and how what was not completed by the CCG should or could be categorized and represented to the CCG’s audiences, particularly to the
OSBT. Along the way that evening, representations were made about what various categories in the audiences expected from the CCG, and how meanings of symbols under debate could or would shape future discussions about and policy for the West Trail Study Area (WTSA). Some CCG members also reflected on the past, explaining how their interpretations of certain symbols structured their interaction in the process, even their participation in the CCG process.

Below, I first address the issue of CCG members’ meanings of “consensus,” “nonconsensus,” and “no recommendation,” with primary focus on the meaning of “no recommendation.” The second term of interest below is “plan,” the meaning of which was important to the CCG’s discussion of no recommendation, but also highlights how the many levels of the CCG processes could be interpreted to produce various ends.

**Consensus, Nonconsensus, and No Recommendation**

Throughout the CCG, there was little reflection on the meaning of consensus, the formal decision-making mechanism of the CCG. A definition of that operational term was contained in planning documents, but it was not a topic of group discussion during the preceding months. There also was no definition of nonconsensus, with its meaning assumed, it must be assumed, to be the opposite of consensus, whatever that meant. The CCG design (i.e., written documents) also outline a “nonconsensus process” for resolving policy issues about which the CCG did not reach consensus. As late as the December 2010 study session with the OSBT in, and, it was learned at the final meeting, Peter had been in contact with OSMP about the issue immediately prior to the CCG’s last gathering.

Given this background, it should have surprised few when, nearing the scheduled end time for the final CCG meeting, Peter disclosed that he was “a little confused about the difference between the things we did not finish discussing and the things that are actually
nonconsensus items” (CCG 1/6/11). With those words, the CCG embarked on an extended conversation about what it meant when the group stopped discussing an issue without making a decision in any form; when members, as James put it, “just gave up” (CCG 1/6/11). Talk about unresolved policy issues raised the question about practical meanings of things not talked about, distinct from items talked about but not acted on (i.e., no decision). During their discussion, CCG members referenced how interpretations of “no recommendation” were requested of them by the OSBT, and how meanings of those symbols influenced their actions in the group and were essential to post-CCG decision making. In the following sections, I discuss each, in turn, as they entered the conversation.

**The problems of definitions.** Continuing the statement begun above, Peter was excited, declaring:

> There is a whole discussion that we should have had ((agreement from other members)).

> The Open Space Board actually asked what it means when it says “no recommendation” on the map and we do not have an answer for that. (CCG 1/6/11)

Although Peter gave a good summary of his and others’ concern, it took a few turns, by separate speakers, for reasons of those concerns to be put fully on the table. Michael provided a description of the issue, saying:

> I do not think it is fair . . . for someone to say that something that was never presented to me as an idea, that I never thought of—that OSMP could have presented, that Chuck could’ve presented, anybody could have presented at any time, and had a discussion and maybe reached consensus—but, somehow, that is represented to the board, you know, to all City Council, as a nonconsensus item. (CCG 1/6/11)
Guy added another layer (also noted by Michael) to concerns about the meaning of no recommendation, suggesting that the definition influenced the CCG process:

I, in a sense, feel very uneasy because the assumption was, in talking about all these trail segments that we’ve been talking about for the last year, was that the trail—the larger trail-designated network that they all connected to—would be part of that thing, and to have that now called into question, I find troubling. (CCG 1/6/11)

“That thing,” was elaborated on by Mark O.:

By saying we are going to give all this stuff, and everything we have not talked about you can take away from us, we cannot live with that. What I would propose is that we, at least, have some general language that says if we haven’t talked about it, that the [OSMP] department needs to, you know, again, use least restrictive means to try to fix the problem. If there is a major reroute or closure or something proposed, there needs to be a public process. (CCG 1/6/11)

Mark’s statement, however, skirted the central concern of some CCG members. Michael was a bit more explicit (and Mark O. would use similar language latter in the conversation), saying:

I think most of us . . . are happy with the designated trail system as it exists, and would like it to continue to exist in more or less the same place, in the same form in which it now appears. (CCG 1/6/11)

In summary, those CCG member expressing initial concerns about the meaning of no recommendation (all CCG members came to share a concern about its meanings) had three issues. First, there was the practical meaning of no recommendation with regard to what it meant to others (e.g., the OSBT) when the CCG said that its efforts had produced no recommendation. The second matter was how CCG members interacted with others during the CCG as a result of a
self- and/or group definitions of no recommendation. Third, speakers wondered aloud about how no-recommendation policy issues would be resolved by OSMP staff in the nonconsensus process. Karen, who had little else to say during this conversation, noted that “all we need to do is explain that term,” an act that was easier said than done. Before looking at how the group sought to define no recommendation, attention is given to the question of relevance, or the purpose and/or substantive effects of different definitions of no recommendation, and the CCG’s conversation about those meanings.

**Effects of definitions.** Although the CCG’s conversation about the meaning of no recommendation focused most on post-CCG influences of such a definition, it also contained a good deal of commentary about past influences of members’ definitions of no recommendation. Two principal assumptions about the meaning(s) of no recommendation that CCG members revealed in their talk at the final meeting were assumed by various members, and were claimed to have influenced their interaction and participation in the CCG process. As Mark O. framed the issue, “We have going along this whole time with a misunderstanding about what it is we’re not talking about” (CCG 1/6/11). From Peter’s perspective, the “Open Space Department was not clear about what you meant if we did not make a recommendation, so we erroneously assumed that we were just going to make recommendations about things that we wanted to see changed” (CCG 1/6/11). The other side of assumptions made about the meaning of no recommendation was, as Karen explained, “When I began this process, it was clear to me . . . that there would not be enough time for everything, and that we only can have time for some things” (CCG 1/6/11).

The practical implications of the two different assumptions about no recommendation mentioned above resulted, at the end of the CCG, in different parties reconsidering how they
were engaged in the CCG process. Under the second definition, parties assumed that OSMP would dispense with issues that the CCG did not resolve or discuss. According to those actors, their interpretations of no recommendation led them to focus on what they considered to be most important. The first definition, as Peter said, led him and others to a stance that “considered every single trail in the West TSA” (CCG 1/6/11). In this manner, the crux of the meaning of no recommendation, at the end of the CCG, comes to the fore. If the CCG discussed an issue and did not reach a decision, what did the lack of recommendation by the CCG mean in terms of future planning? Mark O. specified some implications as he and others understood them:

> We have been negotiating in good faith with the expectation that, and the understanding that, our world will not be turned upside down with respect to things we have not discussed. If our understanding were otherwise, we would either have not participated in this process at all ((speaker’s inflection)), speaking as a Recreation Caucus, or we would have hammered on and insisted that we discuss a whole bunch of other stuff. (CCG 1/6/11)

Assumptions about no recommendation meaning “items not considered” led some CCG members to the conclusion that the CCG process was the final word on possible alternatives, and efforts that ”considered all trails in the West TSA,” under the belief that anything not attended to by the CCG would remain “pretty much the same.” The other position assumed that no-recommendation items would, per the CCG’s nonconsensus process, be OSMP’s responsibility, and, therefore, proposals made by members who supported that interpretation of no recommendation were guided by what was most important to them, decisions that they wanted informed by their voice. Two primary reasons for defining no recommendation were given by various members of the CCG: (a) to limit OSMP’s options for major changes to the WTSA
following the CCG, and (b) to make an accurate representation of the CCG’s work to the OSBT and to the public at-large.

The first purpose of defining no recommendation for post-CCG reasons, as Mark O. noted, was because, as he and other interpreted the situation, “to just say . . . that no recommendation means kind of nothing, and that you [OSMP] are able to do whatever you want” (CCG 1/6/11). Mark M. spoke similarly, although he directed his argument to the non-OSMP members of the CCG:

To the Conservation Caucus and the Neighborhood Caucus, the risk to you is just as great to us. By tossing this no recommendation thing over to the department [OSMP], your interests are just as undefined as ours are. By giving them this blanket thing of if it says no recommendation, that kind of means the department [OSMP] does whatever they [sic] want, in spite of a year and a half of work on our behalf, that does not sit well with me. (CCG 1/6/11)

Joe R. responded to such statements by repeatedly noting that OSMP is “not able to do whatever we want just because . . . you have no recommendation” (CCG 1/6/11). OSMP, Joe explained, had structural and relational considerations to account for in its actions, as discussed below.

Ray also had a comment on this question, interpreting efforts to define no recommendation as they were unfolding before him as a means of restricting OSMP’s options after the CCG ended. Ray described the conversation’s goals as an attempt at

a shared set of language to tie the department down . . . . You are not asking us to agree on what we mean by no recommendation; you’re asking us to agree on language that you would like to tie the department in all those cases where there is no recommendation.

(CCG 1/6/11)
Mark M. disagreed with Ray’s interpretation of the action sought on the definition of no recommendation, telling the group, “We are not telling the department what they can or cannot do. We are telling OSBT, [and the Boulder City] Council what it is we mean when we say . . . no recommendation” (CCG 1/6/11). Although overlooking the question of how no recommendation meaning “leave things as they are” did not structure future planning by OSMP, Mark’s description of the need for a definition to represent the CCG’s work was broadly shared by group members. Shelly, for example, said:

I think that it would be the most fair thing to the board and, ultimately, the City Council if they understood what nonconsensus means versus no recommendation. . . . Did they [CCG members] just not have time or were they just really so far apart? I think it is going to inform them [OSBT; sic]. That is why I am in favor of some statement. I do not know what it is. (CCG 1/6/11)

**Purpose of definitions.** Given how much time the CCG spent on the above conversation, the widespread participation in it, and the exact words spoken, the CCG, as a whole, obviously, was concerned with how the OSBT, the Boulder City Council, and the general public would understand its work. The question, and the debate that unfolded, concerned how the CCG work would be represented, and possibilities for action by any party, but, particularly, by OSMP (being the most powerful single actor in the Open Space governance network). Underneath that question, however, was the source of concerns about the meaning of no recommendation. Heather described that foundation later in the meeting as “the amount of distrust in this community around how public lands should be managed and planned” (CCG 1/6/11).
The distrust that Heather referenced, however, was not equally distributed across sectors of the community (a detailed understanding of those relations is beyond the scope of this report). Although not suggesting that OSMP does not have biases, as well as reasons for distrust of user groups, during the CCG, there was little evidence of malicious actions by OSMP against one group or another. The distrust of OSMP by stakeholders was grounded in concerns about past actions that had been taken (or not taken) by OSMP that harmed a particular group’s perceived interests. The historical roots of the distrust was clear in the words of speakers at the final CCG meeting who commented on the issue no recommendation and if the definition adopted sought to tie down the department. Beverly, for example, explained that she “actually trust[s] the department. I think that they [sic] hire professionals who look at these things. . . . I am comfortable that if it is a big enough that they [sic] will know when to take it to public process” (CCG 1/6/11). Michael came to a similar conclusion, if not one as positive about OSMP, saying, “Ultimately—I hate to say it—we’ve got to trust them and their [sic] judgment, and we can bitch, and we do that in Boulder very well” (CCG 1/6/11).

Chapter 6 showed that OSMP staff and members considered Heather to be an informal but authoritative representative of the OSBT. It was in such a role that early in the no-recommendation discussion, she attempted to steer the group away from the topic. As she explained:

I think it would be a faulty assumption for anyone around this table or the Open Space board to make that if you did not agree to it—if it is not explicitly listed as an agreement in your final document—that it is a nonconsensus item. I do not think you are going to get consensus on a recommendation that everything you do not have an explicit
agreement upon, either to agree or to make it nonconsensus is status quo. I think that is going to be a hard sell for tonight. (CCG 1/6/11)

Generally good at forecasting the CCG’s potential for action one way or another, here, again, Heather was correct. Those seeking a covering definition for no recommendation had a mountain to climb, and only minutes to do so—a “hard sell,” perhaps, was an understatement. CCG members, however, pressed on, riding roughshod over a later suggestion offered by Heather that she compile competing positions on no-recommendation items and close the matter.

Michael went even further than Heather, declaring, “This is a ridiculous argument to be having, discussion to be having” (CCG 1/6/11). Michael gave two reasons for that position. “First of all, OSMP can ignore everything we have recommended. Number two, we have already given [sic], we have given them [sic] language, that, you know, you could drive a Mack truck through” (CCG 1/6/11). “They [sic] have,” Michael continued,

complete jurist, authority, permission to reroute [for] sensitive plant communities, areas that need repair, up and down the hillside. They [sic] can do so much right now that that the only way to police that, or patrol that, is to keep the CCG going ((laughs)) for about 5 years. (CCG 1/6/11)

Michael’s positions were not heeded, and Michael, himself, eventually, would contribute to the production of the “ridiculous argument . . . discussion.” Guy, who was mostly silent throughout the conversation about no recommendation, did make an observation worth nothing. First, in light of what Michael was explaining, Guy suggested that CCG members draft statements that framed the CCG process and decisions from their individual or caucus positions. Second, and more interesting, Guy was the only person to speak that night to group members’
emotions, all of the above suggesting that those emotions were more important in that discussion than was rationality. As Guy noted:

I think we need to let go. The CCG processes is over. We did what we did. We’re about to revert to being private citizens. All of these issues get addressed with business-as-usual practices. We, like anybody else, have ways that we can participate. We did what we did. What we did we should be proud of. We didn’t do everything. It’s time to move on.

**Definitions.** Although in agreement that the group’s meaning of no recommendation was consequential for themselves and others, CCG members remained divided on what the term’s meanings were for individual members and what should be its meaning for the group. As CCG members discussed the importance of defining that term, several definitions were suggested, an exercise that, at once, clarified and complicated matters. Michael, for example, told the CCG to “forget about individual trails” where no decision was made, saying:

We can agree to the principle . . . [that] we, as a CCG, want the designated trails in the system to, by and large, remain in existence [as they are], to take into account the visitor experience—in terms of capturing the views, the shade, the natural experiences that we all enjoy—and, at the same time, balance the need to reroute those trails with concerns for sensitive environments, sustainability, etc. (CCG 1/6/11)

Chuck was more specific, explaining, “I am just being picky on words. I do not want no recommendation to mean no consensus; they are different things” (CCG 1/6/11).

For some time, the CCG’s conversation about no recommendation tumbled along, with various definitions thrown out alongside those definitions’ real and imagined past and future implications. Eventually, Peter told the group that “I spoke to Joe [R.] about this over the last
several days. I came up with some . . . language” to describe issues for which the CCG had no recommendation. Peter’s proposal was to place a statement in the CCG’s report reading, in full:

The CCG has carefully considered every trail in the West TSA. In many cases, we chose not to make any recommendations. It is our intention that those trails for which we have not made a recommendation should be left more or less as is within the time frame of the West TSA process, and allowing for minor reroutes that are intended to improve sustainability, habitat, or the visitor experience. We recommend that any major future reroutes should undergo a public input process. (CCG 1/6/11)

Peter’s statement evidences what concerned Ray about the meaning of no recommendation being less important than what no CCG recommendation meant in terms of OSMP’s activity going forward. Peter’s statement, however, also provided a stable center to the conversation, allowing the CCG to talk about something concrete rather than abstract hypotheticals about past and future implications of the meanings of no recommendation. Having such an anchor for the discussion, however, did not necessarily lead to clarification about meanings of no recommendation; having a focus for the conversation allowed meanings of no recommendation to be parsed even further.

Recall from the discussion earlier that the issue of whether the CCG had considered every trail was significant to the CCG’s definition of no recommendation because if CCG considered every trail, any trail (or other issue) on which the CCG had no recommendation would suggest the principle that Michael described above (i.e., leave as is). There were, however, protests from CCG members about the claim that the CCG had considered every trail. From OSMP’s perspective, Joe noted that “I fully respect that you did, Peter. The department has done its best to do it as well, but I know that there is still some stuff that we’re just tangled in, so that part is
troubling” (CCG 1/6/11). Beverly explained that Conservation Caucus members also “did not consider every trail” (CCG 1/6/11). Members of the Neighborhood Caucus, similarly, were circumspect in what they did and did not attend to during the CCG, a description of their efforts that, as shown in Excerpt 8.1, frustrated Peter.

Excerpt 8.1. We considered every trail (CCG 1/6/11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelly</th>
<th>We didn’t consider every trail [to be quite honest]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>[I did, why didn’t ] you? That was your task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>I did not have [time ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>[You were tasked]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>What, what, what I was saying was that while we endeavored to consider every trail we . . . either didn’t have enough time for certain trails or areas for which we were unable to make a good case or get to a place where we even got to—I don't know how to word this—where we were even able to get to a point where we could get nonconsensus on it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Brackets represent overlapping talk.

Differences in how individual members and caucuses approached their CCG tasks, as understood in light of what no recommendation from the CCG would mean after the CCG ended, opened another dimension of possible actions that the CCG, as a group, could or did take on an item. Thus far, the group had discussed consensus and nonconsensus items, dispensing with them under meanings stated in the CCG Ground Rules. The question of the meaning of no recommendation arose for items in-between the poles of consensus and nonconsensus. For some CCG members, all possible items in-between those extremes were “considered,” and, therefore, a general principle about no-recommendation items could be applied; others, however, had not “considered every trail” and, therefore, there was more than one category of no recommendation.

James was most adamant about the need to make distinctions within the no-recommendation category; at the very least, he argued, there were items discussed for which the CCG had no recommendation, and items about which the CCG had no recommendation because
it did not discuss them. As James explained, “There is no technical definition for ‘not talked about’” (CCG 1/6/11). Before getting into details, Excerpt 8.2 shows the difficulty that James’s definition first faced.

Excerpt 8.2. No, there are four (CCG 1/6/11)

Mark M. It seems to me that we should be able to very quickly and simply define what nonconsensus means and what no recommendation means . . .

James There is no list of “no decisions”

Mark M. There does not need to be a list, there has to be a definition.

? We did not get around to it

Heather So here’s—you would, basically, have three buckets under this proposal . . .

James And there is a fourth category, which is we didn’t even talk about it

Beverly That’s no recommendation

James No

Shelley Those two things are no recommendation, but there are two different sources

James NO, there is a difference between not coming to a—not creating the consensus statement and not talking about it

Mark O. Those are the three categories

James No there are four, because if I said something like, “We talked about a reroute . . . but we did not come to any kind of consensus agreement one way or the other about it,” that is not having a consensus agreement. Maybe that’s different than having a consensus that we are not going to have consensus, but it is a different thing versus something, some trail we did not talk about it all

Note: Longer speaking turns have been truncated, represented by “. . .”

At the end of the exchanges in Excerpt 8.2, Heather said that she understood James as “identifying a difference without a distinction” (CCG 1/6/11). There was, however, an important distinction being made, although the language of the discussion was somewhat of a barrier to understanding the subtle difference James identified. Members of the CCG were attempting to find a means of categorizing decisions that the group did not make, with the discussion focusing on the general category of no recommendation. Peter’s proposal assumed that “every trail had been considered,” a description from which could follow a universal definition of no recommendation as “leave things as they are.” James, in contrast, held that such a definition was improper because he and others might have liked to see changes, but they did not succeed in
making their case for such changes, and, therefore, “leave it as it is” was not an accurate
description of the position of all group members for every no-recommendation item. Even
before that consideration, however, James was arguing against a universal definition of no
recommendation, assuming that “we considered every trail” was inaccurate because there were
trails/items that the CCG had not discussed at all.

As James presented the situation, there were two types of no recommendation. In the
first instance, CCG members began a conversation about an issue but never came to a decision
point. Joe R. described those items as “unfinished parts of the conversation” (CCG 1/6/11). In
the second case, there were items that, simply, never were raised by the group for discussion.
James was saying that the meaning of no recommendation should be different in each case,
because, in the first, policy differences might exist of which a blanket “leave it as is” would deny
the existence. In the latter case, differences were not surfaced through talk, and, therefore,
“leave it as it is” might be acceptable to James. For James, the situation was clear:

I am only willing to talk about things that everybody agrees we did not talk about. . . . If
you’re going to apply language that says we didn’t talk about it, then we all have to agree
that we did not talk about it. . . . If I talked about it and didn’t get my way, and nobody
remembers that we talked about it—only me—I’m not gonna provide consensus that
proposes something different than what I wanted. (CCG 1/6/11)

Joe R. described James as holding that “more things . . . should’ve been driven into the
nonconsensus pile” (CCG 1/6/11), an accurate description, but one that should not be assumed to
be achievable in all cases. As Joe noted, “We didn’t have time” (CCG 1/6/11). Karen expanded
by saying, “We didn’t have 5 years, we only had year and a half” (CCG 1/6/11). For those
parties still not quite clear on the point of the distinction, Shelly attempted to clarify:
I do see no recommendation—there is a distinction between the reasons behind why there was no recommendation. That does become important, because even if we did have a conversation about it but we don’t have any recommendation, that’s quite different than, gosh, we didn’t talk about it at all. (CCG 1/6/11)

Identifying types of no recommendation, however, was easier than resolving the question to everyone’s satisfaction. For some time, the CCG’s discussion stumbled around listing variables that affected the ability of the CCG to discuss an item (e.g., time), and ways of marking distinctions between categories of no recommendation. Mostly, though, the talk went in circles.

James said that the distinguishing characteristic of no recommendation was “whether we [the CCG members] made you [Heather] call the question. Most of the time, we just gave up” (CCG 1/6/11). Michael suggested that anything not contained in these recommendations piles [i.e., consensus and nonconsensus] is a matter that was . . . either not raised; if raised not discussed; if raised and discussed, not discussed sufficiently ((group members laugh)) for a number of reasons, but I will live with what James suggested

Mark O., however, still was looking for something more concrete, saying, “I don’t understand why we cannot come to an agreement on just the basic principles of what we mean if we didn’t talk about it” (CCG 1/6/11). Joe R. responded:

I think the answer to your—the board’s question—what no recommendation is, the answer is: This group doesn’t all share the same definition of what that means. . . . I’m suggesting that we can all not come to common ground; the answer to the question, from
my standpoint, to the board, is: We do not have a shared vision of what that means. (CCG 1/6/11).

One reason for that lack of shared vision/meaning, was that there were differences among CCG members’ understanding of where the “CCG plan” ended and the “West TSA Plan” began.

“The plan” and “The Plan”

At the beginning of this report, I noted how the CCG process fit into a larger framework of OSMP planning within the overarching structure of the Visitor Master Plan (VMP). The second of four TSA planning processes that had been initiated by the VMP, the WTSA planning process was divided into the CCG’s recommendations and the WTSA Plan that was produced by OSMP staff, of which the CCG recommendations were a major component. There were, however, many things necessary for the WTSA Plan to which the CCG did not attend, for any number of reasons. In addition to those reasons noted previously, there were no-recommendation items, because, as Joe R. reminded everyone, “There were some things in the first weeks of starting our negotiations that you said . . . the CCG does not want talk about this; OSMP go ahead and deal with it” (CCG 1/6/11). Therefore, early in the CCG process, a distinction was drawn between two dimensions of the final WTSA Plan: the CCG’s component and OSMP’s part.

As the discussion about no recommendation circled around, the importance of the two plans, for perhaps the first time in the CCG process, became stark and meaningful, principally because the language of those supporting a universal definition of no recommendation were not only saying that this is what “we” did and did not do but they also were setting the boundaries of the WTSA Plan.

Joe R. was the only member of the CCG speaking to that issue, explaining:
There is a West TSA plan that will come out. The component that you are writing tonight is a piece of the West TSA plan. There are things, like I said, we didn’t talk about in here, there are things we did not finish the conversation about. The department may or may not put these things in the plan. For the piece of the plan that we [OSMP] have to write, there will be a public input session on those. . . . That’s good governance, period. No recommendation means the conversation was not finished. (CCG 1/6/11)

Hence, Joe R. was saying that he (i.e., OSMP) was not willing to accept no recommendation as “leave it as it is” at the conclusion of the CCG. According to Joe R.:

The words have to say “after the West TSA plan.” That’s what I am willing to agree to. That is what I’m willing to say is okay, not “at the end of CCG.” . . . Peter had some language around that proposal. . . . It’s at the end of the West TSA plan that I can agree to that. There’s a public input point between the two that covers anything else. (CCG 1/6/11)

Stakeholders and Government

Around 9:30 pm, Johannes gave his only input on the issue of no recommendation. Seated at the rear of the room, away from the action at the table, he said, “We are 20 minutes past my bedtime. We are not going to come to agreement on this. This discussion should be ended” (CCG 1/6/11). Twenty minutes later, Heather called the question, asking for the group’s consensus about the meaning of “no recommendation” and “no discussion.” Grounded in the preceding conversation, the exact definitions were to be drafted later and circulated for formal consent. “Going, going, gone. Thank you,” Heather said matter-of-factly (CCG 1/11). Everyone in the room began to take a breath.
“Well,” Marks O.’s voice grew louder as the word took shape, and, then, silence. Finding the words, Mark continued, “I’m just not happy with it. I’m not happy with it. I’m not happy with it at all” (CCG 1/6/11). Michael was quick to respond, saying that, with respect to consensus, being happy with the outcome, “that’s a different question” (CCG 1/6/11) than providing consensus. It took a few more moments, and some coaxing by Heather, but Mark soon clarified that

if there . . . is significant change from what we have discussed, specifically, here—you know, whether it is Joe’s part of the West TSA that we did not talk about, or whatever—I would consider my agreements absolutely null and void. I won’t agree to whatever I agreed to if I’m going to get stabbed in the back in this process. (CCG 1/6/11)

Mark used the “stabbed in the back” in reference to violations of the implicit ethics of reciprocity on the part of others for his and his caucus’s “good faith” efforts to “consider every trail,” and out of recognition that he and the Recreation Caucus representatives engaged the CCG as if those trails/areas not discussed were to remain “pretty much as is.” The potential for violations of trust, of course, were representations of those who would do such things, and Mark was prepared to name names. Excerpt 8.3 picks up with Mark’s response to probing by Heather, in which she said, “I’ve heard other people have to take a leap of faith and trust that the [OSMP] department won’t do anything crazy and back-staby. Are you telling me that you are not prepared to take that same leap of faith?” (CCG 1/6/11).

Excerpt 8.3. Stabbed in the back (CCG 1/6/11)

Mark I’m telling you, I can’t figure out why the department is unwilling to make a statement that they [sic] won’t stab me in the back.
Heather I’m not sure the department is the only one that’s troubled by your language. I think there’s a lot of folks for whom that feels uncomfortable.
Okay, I’ll restate my concern. I’m concerned that both the department and the Conservation Caucus is unwilling to make a statement that they won’t stab me in the back.

Sharp words to or about people had been spoken during the CCG, and the final weeks had seen the most direct criticisms and actions based on negative categorical assumptions that CCG members made about other CCG members. Mark’s criticism of other people (as opposed to other people’s policy preferences), although biting, was not the only extreme ascription uttered during the CCG. Additionally, at that moment, on that particular concern, other members of the CCG had similar perspectives to Mark’s; he might be celebrated for his opposition. From all sides, however, Mark’s fellow CCG members, even if they agreed in principle that he had a valid concern, judged as unproductive the route that he had chosen to defend against such threats.

For the CCG members, events discussed below about “backstabbing” were profoundly consequential, not just in terms of “successfully” concluding the CCG but for what did and could have, and will and might, follow in the CCG’s wake. In terms of this report, those discussions cannot be overlooked (and, by no means, are uninteresting in their right) but, primarily, they are employed here as stepping stones to the final agreement of the CCG that concluded the process, its practical implications, and conceptual puzzles raised by the final resolution of the CCG. For that reason, I do not dwell here on the unfolding narrative, itself, but on a few important points at which parties to the CCG offered reflections about the process and about each other. At the outset, it should be noted that the conversation reported below leads to few neat conclusions, and, in some respects, it throws into question previously stated conclusions. Hence, the discussion in this section does not narrow to an answer that rationalizes the CCG process; instead, it expands questions that must be considered when conceptualizing and/or engaging in
participation, and governance, more generally. The sections below discuss, in turn, themes of CCG member’s power to affect events after the CCG, the necessity of trust to post-CCG decisions, and the significance of symbols to interpretations of power and trust.

**Voice without Vote**

Not every CCG member participated in the discussion after Mark’s comment about backstabbing. At a substantive level, three parties spoke, and each had very different roles, perspectives, and experiences in the Open Space community historically and during the CCG. Individually, their statements referenced the already noted inability of the CCG to bind anyone to anything (save its members during the process), and they added perspectives on constituent relationships influencing representatives at the table, the human dimensions of OSMP (i.e., its staff), investments of individuals and the department in the CCG process, and the legacy of the CCG.

Below, I present the core of statements by those parties that spoke to the group, statements that, in practical terms, as noted by Mark O., resulted in a second chance to concluded the CCG, if not neatly, at least without an outwardly rippling implosion. First, a few of Joe R.’s words about the department are presented, followed by Heather on the CCG, the department, and the community at-large. Finally, Michael (with the assistance of others) talked about his experiences as the Dog Representative and his constituents’ concerns about his collaboration (i.e., talking together with intent of joint action) with members of the Conservation Caucus.

Joe R. began by saying, “I respect and I understand what [Mark] is saying,” and then reiterated, “I’ve been very clear tonight on what language I’m open to agreeing to. The language I’m okay agreeing to is ‘at the end of the West TSA plan planning process’” (CCG 1/6/11). With respect to the immediate concern Mark had raised, Joe was no less clear:
To be honest, on a personal level, I don’t believe that Mark is going to wake up February 1 when that big plan comes out and say, “God Damn It, why did I agree to everything I agreed to, because now the department stuck this knife in my back?” I work here. I know these people. I know the conversations we have. Nobody has any intentions of sticking a knife in your back. (CCG 1/6/11)

Heather later added to Joe’s representation of the people at OSMP:

What I think is important, and has been a huge learning thing for me—and I hope for all of you around the table, and I hope for every member of the OSMP staff who is in this room—is the amount of distrust in this community around how public land are managed and planned for is substantial, it is crosscutting. One of the things that I presume—having not been here in the beginning—that OSMP was hoping to do by initiating this process—which has been painful and agonizing and expensive for everyone—was to start to turn over a new leaf. To take a different approach and engage stakeholders in a fundamentally different way, in a more proactive way. So, your engagement in this process—it has been hard, and unpleasant, and fun, and interesting, and lively, all of those things, depending on the moment—I hope that you did that, partly, as in “OSMP is trying. I’m going to try, too.” (CCG 1/6/11)

Heather also spoke about the CCG members and the practical problems of time and perceptions, explaining how some CCG members were able to attend to some open issues in the final weeks, whereas others could not. Alluding to the issue of “considering every trail,” Heather told the group:

I don’t think that, in any way, whether you are in group A or group B, you have any less passion or interest in the West TSA. I think that it is what it is. I would be very sad to
see all of the hard work that you’ve done undone today over this. . . . It is not in service
to the time you have spent together. . . . We weren’t clear about this assumption. Some
of us came into it with one assumption, some with another assumption. We never
clarified that. Is that a lapse and 40-page protocol document? Perhaps. Is that a lapse in
just general human behavior? Perhaps. Whatever it is, that sucks. Here’s where we are,
going on to 18 months of hard, hard work over a thing that nobody did with ill intentions;
it just fell through the cracks. (CCG 1/6/11)

Michael also addressed the issue of trust and the outcomes of the CCG, saying:

I never thought things couldn’t turn out in a way that I did not like them in a
nonconsensus process. That’s why this is such a ridiculous argument, discussion to be
having. To break this up over something like that is really silly, because they’ve got so
much discretion already. (CCG 1/6/11)

**Uncertainty and Trust**

There was another story Michael had to tell, however. The discussion above about the
CCG Preliminary Plan Open House mentioned that during the CCG, a public split had developed
among members of the “Open Space dog community,” or, more specifically, among members of
the organized interests group Friends Interested in Dogs and Open Space, of which Michale was
then president. Beginning, Michael said:

Heather, I’ve just gotta say something to Mark. Early on in this process, there were
people in the dog community who wanted to tie my hands from making a proposal. . . . I
could not have moved in this process with that kind of fear or concern or lack of trust,
irrationality of this CCG process, of the Board of Trustees, of the community itself. We
have to live with a certain amount of uncertainty, and we have to have a considerable
amount of trust. I refuse to believe this is an irrational town; crazy sometimes, but not irrational. I refuse to believe that anyone—of all the people, the climbing community had least on the line in this whole process. (CCG 1/6/11)

In that statement, Michael raised the issue of Mark O.’s constituency—rock climbers—having less to lose to uncertainty than did members of other stakeholder categories. That is an interesting dimension of the CCG not discussed previously, because the issue of rock climbing and rock climbers was not a major topic in the CCG, as rock climbers’ social and environmental impacts are relatively light, and they, generally, are viewed as responsible Open Space stakeholders. More important, the main climbing interest group in Boulder, the Flatiron’s Climbing Council, has agreements with the OSMP to not restrict access to “historic climbing routes” (i.e., existing routes), an agreement that was a CCG Sideboard.

In other words, climbers’ interests (i.e., access to places to climb) were protected by a governing document, an inviolable boundary of the CCG’s space for action. As a result, there, virtually, was no discussion about climbing or climbers during the CCG, and little to no chance that anything that they had at the time would be “given away” in negotiations or post-CCG WTSA planning. With their interests actually on the line, all of the other parties were willing to trust that the WTSA Plan would not violate the (ideal) spirit of the CCG. Michael was saying, with little on the line for the caucus that Mark formally represented, that his objection should not stand; Mark’s concerns were not invalid but the means by which he was attempting to address those concerns, Michael (and others) noted, were not appropriate. Michael’s statement above is continued in Excerpt 8.4, because overlaying the description of relations in the Open Space community as nearly irreparable was talk among CCG members that posited an immediate piece of contradictory evidence.
**Excerpt 8.4 Those people (CCG 1/6/11)**

Michael: Understand that I have taken a huge live leap off the cliff to collaborate with these people, with the fear out [there
Ray: [those people]
Michael: these people, these four or five people who I have now been accused of actually liking
Heather: Say it’s not so
Michael: [Say it’s not so]
Karen: [and agreeing ] to jump off the third Flatiron with
Michael: we made a pact that we’d jump off the third Flatiron with each other. I am not being overly dramatic when I tell you how much trust this required, and how much the paranoia out there is

Note: Brackets represent overlapping talk.

Recall that early in the CCG Michael had expressed concern about not knowing the “Conservation folks,” wondering aloud: “Do they hate me because I’m a dog rep?” Although a suicide pact is odd grounds for claiming improved relationships, or at least understanding of the other, between CCG members, it is evidence of change. Other examples of CCG members beginning to work across their differences was an effort by Karen and Johannes to work together in the last days of the CCG to pursue mutual gains for their constituents. The example of constructive movements in stakeholder relations were scare during the CCG, but they were present, a fact that given what transpired during the CCG, should give slight hope. As the following, and final, narrative suggests, among Open Space stakeholders specifically, those small grains should be tightly seized.

**The Politics of Symbols**

During most of the preceding statements, the CCG was operating under the assumption that its plans were not consensus plans. Asked if he was objecting to final adoption of the CCG recommendations, Mark O. said, “I don’t know. I need to talk to some people” (CCG 1/6/11). The CCG had a proposal from Gwen to consider before wrapping up, which it swiftly dispensed.
As Heather was attempting to explain where the group, soon to disband without a consensus product, was heading, Mark asked for the floor. Noting that much had “been said of trust and building bridges and getting along,” Mark had a proposal for the group; for members of the Conservation Caucus, to be exact. As Mark said:

I would just like to throw one more, call it a “Hail Mary”. . . . I will sign onto what we have done without, you know, holding things up—I don’t want to hold things up—if there is any one person in the Conservation Caucus who will sign a joint statement to the board—and this is separate from the recommendations—if any one of these five will sign a joint statement with me effectively saying that my understanding—and I don’t know how it would be worded but if you would work with me on something like that—and sign a joint statement to the board just saying our understanding as a Recreation Caucus, and that the conservation group agree that our understanding as a Rec Caucus, or that this one person agrees that our understanding was, that things are basically gonna stay the same, then I would be willing to drop my objections and sign on. (CCG 1/6/11)

Beverly had a question about Marks’ proposal, but she was willing to consider signing such a statement. When Beverly agreed to consider Mark’s statement, acceptance of that role assumed that Mark no longer was blocking CCG consensus on the group’s recommendations. There was, however, never a formal agreement to move the CCG plan forward to the OSBT; the CCG’s consensus recommendations, in real terms, still were tentative. Because the OSBT adopted the CCG’s proposals in February 2011 (without changes detrimental in ways that the no-recommendation discussion imagined), the tentativeness of those agreements at the end of the CCG had no practical importance. What is interesting about the final decision of the CCG is that it was layers upon layers of representations, and representations of representations, all wrapped
around each other. There, certainly, was plenty of substance in the CCG’s plan recommendations; here, I am isolating the final proposal, itself. In closing this discussion, and the story of the CCG, I briefly pull apart the layers of Mark’s resolution to the no-recommendation dispute.

First, there is the question of Mark as a representative himself, formally and informally, both of which entered into the proposal. Mark formally represented climbers, who, as climbers, virtually were immune from action by OSMP against their interests. Climbers, however, were not named in Mark’s final proposal. The proposal claimed for Mark an informal role as representative of the Recreation Caucus, saying, “Our understanding as a Rec Caucus, or that this one person agrees that our understanding was.” Second, the proposal offered to forward a representation (i.e., the statement) of how Mark and other Recreation Caucuses members interpreted no recommendation as “leave as is.” No matter how true that meaning might have been for those individuals identifying with it, the proposal could make a claim only that that was how the term was understood—it was a representation of the representations (i.e., communication) that representatives made during the CCG. Third, Beverly, or any other signatory to the statement, in doing so, was representing Mark’s representation of the meaning of no recommendation as it was represented to signatories by Mark (and others). The proposal already was a complex of representations, but because, at the time, there was no concrete proposal—“you would work with me on something like that”—the proposal, itself, was a representation of the final statement. To summarize, when Beverly agreed to the proposal, at that moment, she was agreeing to a representation of a representation of Mark’s representation of no recommendation that would be represented to the OSBT.
Conclusion

For the present purposes, the story of the Community Collaborative Group was closed with the confused and harrowing events at the group’s final meeting. After that meeting, there was no longer, in real terms, a Community Collaborative Group in the network of Open Space governance; all that remained were representations of ex-Community Collaborative Group members, representations of the defunct Community Collaborative Group process, and the actual Community Collaborative Group plan (itself, a representation of the CCG’s work, processes, and members). The Community Collaborative Group succeeded in producing a plan, but, as was quite clear at the end, the consensus approval of that plans was held together on a wish and a prayer. Technically consensus was reached, but a better description of the outcome might be “consenselessness.”
CHAPTER 9
DISCUSSION

The goal of this research study was to investigate the logic of the transformative thesis of participation by examining uses and interpretations of symbolic categories of “stakeholders” in the context of a public process. The preceding chapters have shown how meanings of symbolic categories are constituted in communication processes that name and give meaning to stakeholder categories, and how uses and interpretations of those categories are influential on participatory processes and products. The analysis confirms the usefulness of categories to the study of the relational dimensions of participation, and it offers a clear alternative to existing theoretical ideals about transformation with practical purchase that is not found in current approaches.

With respect to the capacity of participation to transform relations, the claims that can be made on the basis of this case study are inconclusive. Many people involved in the process, or those who read this report, might be quick to declare the West Trail Study Area (WTSA) Community Collaborative Group (CCG) a failure at fostering constructive relations among Boulder Colorado’s Open Space stakeholders. Such black-and-white conclusions, however, are not supported. Failure and success are relative, and blanket descriptions of a complex and variously understood process, such as the CCG, are not particularly helpful. Rendering a judgment about the CCG’s successes and/or failures, much less draw lessons from those conclusions, requires a fine-grained approach that struggles with the multiple influences on the CCG, and the many influence of the CCG on people and policies.
This chapter articulates some of the more salient and important lessons learned from the preceding narrative and analysis of the CCG, especially about the CCG’s successes and failures at transforming stakeholder relations. The first section below provides a grounded framework for thinking about and enacting participation within a perspective of practical theory as engaged reflection that recognizes such practices as being disruptive to prevailing uses and interpretations of stakeholder categories and discourses, and it suggests that to progress towards relational transformation, ideals and performance of participation should be constructed strategically. Within the perspective of strategic participation, the second section summarizes and expands lessons noted in the analysis chapters concerning concepts for understanding, tools for enacting, and resources for studying participation strategically. The third section reflects on affordances and constraints of grounded participation research for participation theory and practice, generally; strategic participation, specifically; and this study of the CCG, discreetly.

**Transformation in/as Disruption**

Practical theory as engaged reflection (see Barge & Craig, 2010) holds that to comprehend and influence ideals and enactments of phenomena, researchers and practitioners should foster reflexive discourses in-between theories and practices of those phenomena. According to Craig (1996), a reflexive discourse couples together formal, systematic, and abstract theoretical discourses with contingent, particular, and local practical discourses. Such a perspective is well suited for attending to issues involved in the subject of public participation, which, as Webler (1999) noted, suffers from “ineffective discourse” (p. 65) among its interdisciplinary theorists and practitioners. Promoting what he called the “craft–theory dialectic of public participation,” Webler held that it was necessary for participation to “find a way to
build on its tremendous strength in practice and craft and to feed this experiential knowledge and reflection into a dialectical process with theoretical reflection” (p. 60).

Whether it is called “reflexive discourse” or “craft–theory dialectic,” by assessing theoretical ideals in a practical enactment of participation, and allowing the practice of participation to inform what theory was relevant, this study has taken a significant step in the direction of creating stronger and more flexible links between the theory and practice of participation. Among this study’s most important lessons for participation in-between theory and practice is that theoretical ideals should not assume that participation operates in a linear manner or that participation should be considered the solution for all public decision-making situations. More work is needed to develop theoretical ideals of participation that also are practical, but as the (almost) ideally designed CCG suggests, as a general principle, participation in theory and practice should be idealized from a strategic perspective that can manage and facilitate the inevitable disruptions of participation to meanings in/of relations.

**Participation, Transformation, and Disruptions**

Starting with stakeholder categories that had a representative at the table during the CCG, this study began by seeking to understand meanings of those categories in local discourses prior to the CCG, examine uses and interpretations of those categories across the CCG, and draw conclusions about what, during the CCG, contributed to changes (or lack thereof) in the meanings of those categories-in-use. What became immediately clear, however, was that among members identifying with categories that were formally represented in the CCG process, there was little agreement about the meanings of those categories. Furthermore, the longer that the CCG progressed, the clearer it became that categories formally represented by CCG members were identified with by members of other categories; hence, relevant categories were
nonexclusive. Taken together, stakeholders identifying with categories relevant to the CCG were members of more than one relevant category, and they defined differently each of those shared symbols. Therefore, meanings and membership of categories that were formally represented constantly were contested before, during, and after the CCG. When viewed in relation to the entire CCG process, disputed meanings and memberships of relevant social categories become extremely important, not just for understanding the CCG but for articulating a communication approach to public transformation.

Because categories carry with them general meanings, but those meanings always are articulated locally in different ways in different discourses, individuals (and groups) may not interpret categories similarly, meanings of categories used to describe self and others may not agree, and the same symbols might be used to describe different types of people. In everyday interaction, meanings of categories are deep backgrounds for interaction; their meanings are contested when interaction requires, but ambiguity and differences often are allowed to exist. During public participation, however, meanings of categories are front and center; the value and values of categories used, for example, to reference interested and affect parties (i.e., stakeholders), are sites of contestation over the equality of the process, legitimacy of participants, and fairness of decisions made. Participation gathers together people (and groups) with various interests and identities, ideals and desires, and needs and expectations who may not have interacted previously, or even paid much attention to each other. What extant participation theories and practices often overlook is that when all those differences are placed in the same location, and interaction is predicated on ideals of openness and reciprocity, significant symbols (e.g., categories) of one group are confronted with different interpretations of that symbol by
other groups, and that the meanings of those symbols start to be openly discussed and renegotiated in-between differences.

Public participation combines the demand for negotiating meanings of categories with the equally challenging reality that participation can, and perhaps should, alter discourses of governance. Changed discourses are long-term aims of participation, but depending on the type of participation process, changes to discourses also may be immediate. Immediate change is the case with a participation process in which stakeholders play a substantive role in the work of governing, such as the CCG. At the extreme, a participatory process, at once, can (temporarily) bracket historical structures for managing stakeholder relations (e.g., traditional government), compel understanding of new discourses of the participatory process, and bring all relevant discourses of stakeholders into the interpretive field. Taken together with contests over meanings of stakeholder categories, changes in discourses through which stakeholders make sense of themselves and each other, as well as the issue(s) at hand, means that, locally, efforts to do public participation are invitations to disruption of prevailing meaning of categories and the discourses in which those categories are meaningful.

As discussed in Chapter 2, categories are representations of collectives, but to the degree that this study can speak to general issues of collectivity, it is only because, in a slight of hand, consens-us conceptualizations of categories were replaced with the concept of “membership categories” as communicatively constructed and contested; what I called “dissens-us collectivity.” From a dissens-us perspective, differences, and their management, is what constitutes a collective, not the thin ground of shared interests, meanings, and/or visions. A collective, whether large or small, exists by virtue of people relating to each other through communication, negotiating their differences and similarities, among which are meanings of the
group (or its significant symbols). That ideal of collectivity can be called a *stakeholder vision*, defined as a collective whose members are aware of and view their differences as resources and challenges for the group in its environments, and the term can replace “shared vision” and similar ideas. In other words, the stakeholder concept, and how stakeholders are represented (and by whom) are better starting/end points for collectivity studies than is shared interests; not only does the stakeholder concept offer a more realistic ideal of collectives but its use promotes the opening of collectivity studies that can better inform practice.

In this report, I have attempted to follow Gergen and Thatchenkery’s (2006) position that “rather than inventing new languages of understanding . . . there is much to be said for patient listening and for descriptions and explanations of more delimited and pointed application” (p. 47). The term/concept “stakeholder vision,” however, is an exception to that rule. Consens-us collectivity treats symbolic interests, or the meanings of categories by which collectives are referenced/represented, as common to ingroup members, without exception. Surely, few scholars accept that within the complex collectives that typically are studied (e.g., large organizations, cultures, and societies), meanings of common symbols are uncontested; adoption of the consens-us frame, therefore, is an analytic orientation that is influenced by accepted positions in theoretical discourses. Because people do often categorize, dis/identify, and represent collectives in essentialist and binary ways, it is appropriate and productive to attend to consens-us uses and interpretations of categories, but that cannot be the end of the story, as this analysis of the CCG has evidenced.

Summarily stated, the perspective on relational transformation through public participation suggested by the events and analysis in this report holds that, when enacted, participation, ideally, is disruptive to existing discourses of governing from which meanings and
memberships of relevant social categories are drawn in interaction. When a formal and complex participatory process (i.e., participation that has influence on an important issue) is initiated, a new node is created in existing networks of governance, people in that network change roles (and/or definitions of existing roles change), and processes of governing are altered. In short, how government, self, and others are understood, related to, and interacted with can change immediately as result of experiments in participation. Participation aimed at transformation, consequently, is not about designing perfect processes but about managing participation processes, and, particularly, the management of meanings and practices thrown into confusion by participation. Hence, the question is how to manage those disruptions in pursuit of constructive changes, which is the subject of the next section.

**Strategizing Transformation and the Stakeholder Concept**

Practitioners (e.g., designers and facilitators) know that participation is nonlinear and relational, not formulaic and rational; some scholars recognize this point as well and promote ideals of adaptive designs for participation (see, e.g., Fernandez-Gimenez & Ballard, 2011). However, as a result of a lack of study of participation in situ, many theories and designs of participation have grown rigid. Minor changes to a design in situ easily can break apart the grounds on which participation is legitimated as a transformative practice. The limitations of extant participation theory in practice are well documented; Levine et al. (2005) surveyed an eclectic collection of participation processes and concluded that “only a few . . . incorporate designs that are sufficiently controlled to serve as ideal opportunities to address questions on researchers’ agendas” (p. 280). That conclusion, alongside the fact that participation is pointless if not enacted in practice, confronts participation theorists and researchers with a choice: either their questions need to change (along with the theories) or the claim that participation is or can
be a practical ideal (see Bohman, 1998) must be rejected, and, with it, the prospects for social transformation through participation.

“Stakeholder,” although a troubled term, at present, is the best available concept for conceiving, theorizing, describing, investigating, and practicing relational ideals that are promoted by public participation. If language is considered to be a sign system that is created by humans (Saussure, 1974), the sign systems and institutional relations in which meanings of symbols are constituted in talk can be called “discourses” (Foucault, 1972). Categories exist in-between discourses as “floating signifiers” (see Culler, 1986; Laclau, 2005; Slethaug, 1993), and as “boundary objects” (see Star, 2010; Star & Griesmer, 1989). As floating signifiers, categories can, within limits, adapt to specific situations, and, as boundary objects, categories can translate between different discourses and practices. In short, categories are symbols used and interpreted in-between multiple discourses that are understood in different ways by different people.

Although categories can have universal meanings, meanings-in-use are structured by relevant discourses that are articulated in local contexts. Because stakeholder is used without the weight of conceptual and relational ideals in a multiplicity of discourses and practices, the term can bring disparate areas of study and action into dialogue, fostering what Webler (1999) might have called an “effective discourse.” The rub in that position, however, is that to facilitate interdisciplinary conversations in-between stakeholder theories and practices, the definition of stakeholder cannot be essentialized; instead, meaningful conceptual and relational ideals of stakeholder can have influence across various discourses and practices only if the stakeholder concept and stakeholder relations are defined in light of common uses of the term in those various discourses and practices.
Moving from participation as an abstraction to participation as a concrete reality not only disrupts local discourses but also habits of participation scholarship. Perhaps most important, what can be called “practical participation research” will require the difficult (and epistemologically unsettling) work of deriving practical ideals from the disorderly discourse(s) of participation in practice. Far from limiting the reach of participation theory, such a reorganization provides opportunities to extend public participation scholarship (and practice) from a strategic standpoint.

Strategic thinking in relation to participation means that participation is not done for participation’s sake or simply because a difficult problem arises; instead, strategic participation takes an ecological view of governance, ideally with a long horizon, and asks how disruptions to categories and discourses that are inherent in participation can be accounted for and leveraged in participatory theories, designs, and enactments. In contrast to other ideals, strategic participation is not a tool for civic education, relationship building, or policy making; it is an agenda for doing governance differently, inclusive of each of those aims. A subtle but important distinction, strategic participation takes seriously the idea that participation is a paradigm of “democracy to come” (see Derrida, 2004)—an ideal of democracy that never finalizes meanings of democracy—and it seeks practical means of obtaining that democracy. In the following section, CCG stages, as discussed in the analysis chapters, are used to organize a summary of theoretical and practical lessons from the CCG that can be developed and/or employed to think and act strategically about transformation through processes of participation.

**Strategic Lessons from the Community Collaborative Group**

Supportive and adversarial reviews and critiques of participation theory and practice conclude that the literature is dominated by ungrounded theoretical speculation, and that as
participation theories and practices multiply, assessment of their claims to transform people and policy remain wanting. The best corrective to both of those problematic situations, most authors conclude, would be theoretically informed, longitudinal research of participation in real-world processes of participation. The call for situated participation research on the theory–practice hyphen has been echoed by many, but few have commented on how to conduct investigations that assess normative claims of participation theory under the always nonnormative reality of participation in practice. The preceding stories from the CCG suggest that the first thing participation research in situ should do is to reject existing normative participation theory and foundational approaches to empirical investigation and practices of participation that those theories structure.

Normative participation theory should not be rejected as a guide for grounded research because of its inability to inform practice, as normative theory has much to offer practices of participation, but extant normative ideals of participation nearly are impossible to assess in contexts of practice, because practice is far more complex than normative participation theory suggests. Shedding normative theory from participation research, however, is a difficult prospect. As discussed in Chapter 1, theories provide ways to organize, conduct, and integrate or compare various empirical research products; to work without theoretical guides is to have no foundation on which to stand, an epistemologically unsettling prospect. A postfoundational approach, thus, was taken in this study not because it was desired (other approaches would have been easier) but because differences and contestation about meaning-saturated talk and texts of and about the CCG, and the process, changed significantly over the CCG’s life span. Those facts quickly reduced the value of normative participation theory to understanding the CCG, and they cast widespread doubt on the ability of foundational approaches to account for participation in
practice. Although a rejection of foundations in this analysis of the CCG was predicated on events in situ, personal predispositions to theory and research also contributed to the emergent constellational research design, and, therefore, to the conclusions drawn in this report, as another observer/writer might have seen different cues from the CCG process.

Long before the CCG began, my faith in normative participation theory to explain participation in practice had been extinguished, as existing norms had failed to account for such practices too many times. Additionally, I was well aware of, and critical about, what I described in Chapter 2 as “consens-us collectivity” (i.e., shared, stable, singular meaning of “we”). My assumptions about normative participation theory and collectivity perspectives were informed, in part, by my ethnographic and discourse-analytic ideals about symbols and communication, and about culture and practices, that appear only at the margins of participation and collectivity literatures (see, e.g., Gray, Hanke, & Putnam, 2007). Despite my doubts, I still brought to this investigation an agenda to assess the theoretical claim that participation can transform relations, and the intention of opening space in collectivity studies for “dissens-us” (e.g., different, contingent meanings of “we”). As I interpret the word “foundation,” this research began with decidedly foundational objectives to assess the transformative claim of participation theory and to critique a perceived limitation of collectivity theory. It was only in attempting to carry out that agenda that I found a foundational approach to be lacking for accomplishing the objectives of this study, which led me to reimagine the transformative thesis from a communication perspective.

Chapter 3 explained how this study’s research design, including its postfoundational/constellational approach to theory, emerged from what I witnessed during CCG (and related) meetings. As a result of attempting to track the possible transformation of
meanings across the life span of the CCG by remaining close to the talk and texts informing and producing the CCG, the analysis was forced to contend with the multiple, disputed, and never stable uses and interpretations of relevant categories and discourses. The body of this dissertation pulls in many directions, its parts overlapping and opposing, contradicting and supporting each other, because that was the “nature” of communication during the CCG. Koro-Ljungberg (2004) described the theoretical/empirical bumpiness that is represented in this report as postcritical ethnography’s “functional malfunction” that succeeds by “provoking epistemological criticism” that displaces a single theoretical perspective; from foundational perspectives, such investigations “malfunction” (p. 616). Labeling the present study, or another postfoundational project, as a malfunction because it questions dominant epistemological assumptions, however, overlooks that this study’s (and other investigations’) “malfunctions” are “functional” in the face of ontological facts.

In seeking general conclusions from the preceding analysis, it is tempting to “correct” the investigation’s “malfunctions” by returning to the “functional” discourses that divorce theory and practice. Such an approach, for example, could consider how ideals about the stakeholder concept, collectivity, and/or communicative practices, are informed by study of the CCG, and what those theoretical conclusions suggest for practices of participation going forward. Throughout this study, however, the “malfunctioning” of the postcritical/constellational approach has proven a better “ground” for theories and practices of participation than have foundational perspectives. In drawing conclusions in-between theory and practice, it is critical to sustain the “functional malfunction” of this study because, as Keane noted, “democracy is a precondition of the flourishing of different values and ways of life” (p. 856). Any theory or practice of democracy, whether in existing forms of governance, emerging models of
participation, or “democracy to come,” will be limited if difference, or the absence of shared
ground, is not its foundation. In the following sections, the stages of the CCG are employed to
organize lessons about communicative practices constituting stakeholders in-between theories
and practices of participation without recourse to final foundations. Because the CCG’s phases,
if not the events during them, were similar to ideals and practices of participation, the temporal
sequencing does not foretell efforts at (cautious) generalizations.

Planning: Categorizing Stakeholders

Planning for participation involves many features and functions, some of which are
applicable to all (or most) participation processes, and others of which are unique to specific
situations. Among the most important subjects/concerns in-between the general and the specific
that are critical in planning a process of participation is who participates. Button and Ryfe
(2005) argued that who participates was one of two essential questions for understanding
participation in practice, with the other question being who organizes it. Chapter 4 focused on
the question of who participates, choosing, for practical and theoretical reasons, to name direct
and indirect parties to the CCG as “stakeholders.”

As noted in Chapter 1, the stakeholder concept has not been well developed in public
contexts; when used in discussions of public participation, meanings of stakeholder uncritically
follow those in management theory. Although exceptions exist, in the management literature,
stakeholders are treated, primarily, as interest groups. Gastil (2008) explicitly aligned
management and participation notions of stakeholders, explaining that “in the public
participation and management literatures, the term [stakeholder] has come to refer . . . to persons
who represent organizations, communities, or alliances” (p. 192). In the most comprehensive
review to date of public participation in environmental decision making, Dietz and Stern (2009)
called stakeholders “organized groups” (p. 15). Drawing on situated talk and texts about/of stakeholders during the CCG, this report presented evidence that challenges conceiving of stakeholders as only organized interests, raised questions about whether interest groups can be stakeholders, and asked if interest groups do or can represent stakeholders.

Buss, Redburn, and Guo (2006) noted that “most modes of citizen participation depend on targeting ‘categories’ of stakeholders who will participate,” and asked, “But how should ‘stakeholders’ be defined?” (p. 21). The present study suggests that to be a useful, or practical, concept, stakeholder first needs to be divorced from “interest group,” and then reconstructed in search of richer meanings of stakeholder categories. The principal reason that organized interest groups are troubled ground for ideals of the stakeholder concept stems from the fact, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, that stakeholder status, stakeholder category membership, and meanings of stakeholder categories always are contested. Extant ways of conceptualizing and naming stakeholders that assume stability and sharedness of meanings of relevant categories (i.e., consens-us) have their utility, but one of them is not as ground for stakeholder theory, or for participation or management practices that are predicated on such theories.

The starting point for reworking the stakeholder concept is pragmatic stakeholder theory, which assumes that stakeholder is a locally articulated symbol that represents overlapping and competing interests, identities, and issues. Pragmatic stakeholder theory positions the stakeholder concept as a metatheory, or constellation, in which no normative ground is final, and in which various stakeholder theories can challenge and respond to each other and to different situations. A useful step that displaces the search for foundations and discrete categories of stakeholders (when none exist), the literature related to pragmatic stakeholder theory continues to have limitations that this report exposed but does not necessarily redress.
General stakeholder types that were noted in Chapter 2 (e.g., primary, secondary, and derivative) may be useful to better understand actors and interests in their business or political environment, but more detailed and dynamic typologies are required to respond to questions such as, “Who are these stakeholders?” and “What do they want?” Typologies of general categories of stakeholder have utility for reflection and process planning, but in practice, seemingly stable stakeholder categories dissolve; consequently, complex and practical typologies of stakeholders that can account for stakeholder as a contested category are required. In that respect, participation and management studies should follow Gioia’s (1999) call for a stakeholder research tradition, where “research” means work based on empirical data. Stakeholder research, however, should not be directed at building theories of the stakeholder without practical value.

This study of the CCG suggests that the stakeholder concept is a practical concept for reflecting on participation in practice and for theorizing participation from practical perspectives. That description is at odds with pragmatic stakeholder theory, which continues to assert that stakeholder research “cannot dictate specific actions in the abstract” (R. A. Phillips et al., 2003, p. 485). In fact, many specific courses of action follow from the stories told about the CCG in this report, suggesting that practical ideals of the stakeholder concept are limited, primarily, by the lack of empirical study of stakeholder relations. Among the myriad ways to couple stakeholder theory and practice, this report suggests three as essential. First, the idea that organizers and/or management controls categorization of stakeholders (both in terms of legitimating such status and defining stakeholder relations) should be challenged by examining how people make claims to stakeholder status and symbols of stakeholders’ interests and identities. Second, stakeholder theory and research should limit naming categories of stakeholders in the abstract and attend to how stakeholders use and interpret relevant stakeholder
categories under various conditions. For example, “customer” is stakeholder category in the business world that increasingly is used in the public sector. Customers of private products and services, however, might not think of their interests as a customer differently than in public settings but in public settings, some stakeholders would reject the notion of being called a customer at all, because government products and services are intended for “citizens.”

Stakeholder theory, thus, needs to be more sensitive to the possibility of categories being contested and/or rejected. Third, stakeholder theory and research should occur at and across the boundaries/nexuses of complementary and conflicting discourses, and the next section discusses some lessons learned from the CCG about working in-between discourses.

**Learning: Discourses and Participation**

To move forward and embrace participation’s diversity, Webler (1999) suggested cultivation of theoretical and practical “thematic unity . . . pulling together the multitude of strands that presently make up the field and weaving them into patterns or fabrics of understandings” (p. 65). Webler offered policy discourses, such as environmental issues and risk management, as possible themes. Although sensible starting points, the types of themes that Webler suggested have at least one problem: The study of participation by policy sector will fail to understand how participation in different policy areas is similar and different. To foster a more effective discourse of participation (i.e., one that facilitates communication across differences), the unifying themes of participation should be more conceptual. This report has suggested many conceptual unities of participation (e.g., categorization, dis/identification, and representation) organized by the stakeholder concept, perhaps the single-most important construct in-between the multiplicity of participation discourses.
The stakeholder concept is part of a movement towards studying and theorizing collectivity from dissensus perspectives accounting for relevant discourses; what little movement in that direction has occurred, primarily, is happening in organizational studies. Kuhn (2009), for example, argued for viewing organizations as discourses within discourses, and he drew on theories of identification to assert that “only when scholars possess a conception of the various discourses operating in (and constructing) a setting can they assess the homogeneity or heterogeneity” (p. 697). Koschmann (2012) recently applied such ideas directly to questions about collective identity and interorganizational collaboration (IOC), concluding that “conceptualizing collective identity as an authoritative text helps us better understand the communicative constitution of IOCs and their ability to induce action and coordinate the activities of diverse stakeholders” (p. 22). In short, to understand stakeholders, discourses in which stakeholder categories are sensible and relevant must be understood.

Once the need to account for discourses is recognized, the question arises as to which discourses are necessary to understand and influence participation processes. In addition to the ever-expanding appropriation of participation by numerous fields of study that offer new models and that seek to redefine key concepts, participation has become a professional field, with designers, facilitators, and mediators all working with and offering ideas and approaches. The diversity of perspectives on participation is phenomenal, and those perspectives are a greatly marginalized resource for understanding and improving participation processes. However, because there is no agreement about the meaning of stakeholder, communication, or any other critical concept of participation, theorists, researchers, and practitioners with different approaches and perspectives generally ignore each other.
The story of the CCG suggests that there are many contextual and contingent factors that affect which discourses are relevant in a given situation, and that identifying those discourses should be a feature of both theory and practices of participation. This study of the CCG suggests that, ideally, participation processes should encourage open conversations about uses and interpretations of all discourses that are relevant to uses and interpretations of communication in a particular process of participation. As shown in Chapter 5, however, there are at least three types of discourses on which participation theory and practice must focus.

The first essential discourse of participation is that of policy, or frames within which planning and decision making occur. Policy discourses are among the most central and transcendental discourses across theories and practices of participation, providing terms and meanings that are critical to participation. The second discourse that participation should account for is that of governance, both local and global. “Discourses of governance,” as the term is used here, refer to formal structures and policies (e.g., constitutions and rules) that shape and direct planning and decision making. The third discourse that was identified as being important to the CCG was process discourses, or terms and meanings of the participatory forum, itself. This study focused heavily on the role of representation in the CCG’s process discourses, but other important dimensions of those discourses included decision making (e.g., consensus, nonconsensus, and no recommendation), facilitation, and role of the organizers.

In practice, discourses of policy, governance, and process overlap and intertwine with each other (and with other discourses) to constitute the complex symbolic environment that precedes and follows a process of participation. Part of the purpose of participation in practice is to bring to the foreground of the public’s (or participants’) attention the existence of those mingled discourses, and to search for ways of managing differences in their uses and
interpretations without suppressing inherent and generative differences in their uses and interpretations. Although more work is needed to understand the operations and influences of discourses in participation, this study of the CCG suggests that a practical ideal for all participation processes is to not allow one interpretation of a given discourse to dominate discussions about that discourse. Ideally, participation processes would seek ways to engage in open discussions about all relevant discourses from all directions across the life span of a participation process. Discussions about relevant discourses should be ongoing, as occurred during the CCG concerning the CCG’s process, but they are most usefully conducted during phases of learning/visioning.

Although ideals of participation account for some processes, such as “collaborative learning,” how collaborative/participatory groups learn is poorly conceptualized. What this study of the CCG teaches about learning in participation, primarily, are negative lessons, or things not to do. Specifically, at the highest level, the CCG treated learning as an “information dump” of the City of Boulder Department of Open Spaces and Mountain Parks’ (OSMP) interpretation of relevant discourses; there virtually was no space for CCG members to state their interpretations or to listen to other members’ interpretations. If the aim of learning phases of participation is understanding and the development of a degree of practical expertise among participants, dumping information is useless. “Learning,” in most processes of participation, occurs, or is theorized to occur, in noninteractional practices, such as reading briefing books, an approach that focuses implicitly on defining what the discourse should be and not on how people use and interpret existing discourses.

When employed in practice, learning paradigms of participation tend to favor organizers’ (e.g., in this case, the public agency’s) interpretations, “teaching” participants what organizers
believe is important to know to make informed decisions. Those processes can lead not only to a lack of understanding among participants about each other’s perspectives but they also deny the reality that organizers have a need to understand other participants’ interpretations of the discourse. Woefully underdeveloped in theory, learning in practice, this investigation of the CCG suggests, should be an interactive and exploratory process that is aimed at understanding various interpretations of the “shared” discourse. Exercises that engage participants in real-world examples through which they can explore technical and philosophical realities of their various uses and interpretations, therefore, should be developed.

**Deliberations: Representatives and Representation**

Among the phases of the CCG, the deliberative stage was the most complex, introducing a number of questions, only a handful of which could be attended to in this report. Focusing, as it did, on uses and interpretations of stakeholder categories and discourses, this study, perhaps, was predisposed to taking representatives and representation as central subjects of analysis during the deliberative stages. However, as detailed throughout this report, the CCG’s policy deliberations occurred against a background that was saturated with questions about who was representing who and how that representation was performed. During the deliberative phase of the CCG, examined in Chapters 6 and 7, questions about representatives and representation simply took on new importance to all concerned parties, driving those concerns to the forefront of the process.

Chapter 6 presented evidence suggesting that the CCG’s planning phase’s lack of discussions about the category of “Neighbor” issues, and the competing discourses of “Neighbors’” interests, were a fundamental reason that doubt was cast on the role of CCG “Neighbor” representatives, and their performance of representation, during the deliberation
phase. Among the most interesting conclusions from Chapter 6 was that contrary to received opinions and ideals, all representatives and representations are not created equally, and, perhaps, they should not be idealized as such. As defined by themselves and their constituents, CCG members affiliated with interest groups had unique requirements as representatives, distinct from representatives of the “Neighbors” category, which, themselves, were different from roles and performances of OSMP staff representatives. Furthermore, not only were the CCG members’ roles as representatives, and performances of representation, an issue for the CCG, but so were the representative roles and performances of constituents and decision makers (e.g., OSBT members).

In line with the bona fide group perspective (Putnam & Stohl, 1994), Chapter 6 argued that, in the final account, questions raised during the CCG about what representatives should do, and what representatives do, became highly contentious because all parties failed to effectively manage communication across group boundaries. In practices of participation, there are many group boundaries across which communication must be managed, but analysis of the CCG suggests that two are central. The first is between representatives and their constituents, for to perform their role, stakeholder representatives continually must give and receive information from constituents. In the case of CCG representatives for “Neighbors,” processes for facilitating representative–constituent communication were lacking, and the predicable outcome was widely different ideals about “Neighbor” interests and interests, and the role and performance of “Neighbor” representatives. In the case of the CCG South Neighbor Representatives, different ideals about the roles and responsibilities of representatives led to conflict between those stakeholders and their formal representatives that maimed, and nearly destroyed, the CCG. The
presence of differences about representative roles and responsibilities, therefore, is not something to be treated lightly.

Stakeholder representatives, however, as noted above, do not all have the same roles and responsibilities, a fact that, when coupled with the ambiguous and overlapping boundaries of stakeholder constituencies, suggests that in theory and practice, participation processes need to promote a perspective that understands stakeholder representatives and representation as relationships that are grounded in contingencies of particular stakeholder categories. In this respect, Saward (2010) was correct when he argued that stakeholder representation “involves a radical deconstruction of our received ideas of what a ‘constituency’ is, and can very quickly probe the limitations of our conventional vocabularies of representation and enfranchisement” (p. 100). Throughout the present study, Saward’s claim was supported under various circumstances and by various parties to the CCG, and the policy issues at its center.

The overarching lessons about representatives and representation participation theory and practice that can be derived from this study concern the confluence of stakeholder identification (i.e., naming relevant stakeholders), stakeholder representation claims and ascriptions, and constituent–representative communication. Together, those elements constitute a minimal definition of the process of representation from a communication standpoint. Theory and research about representation, generally, takes the individual representative as the ideal subject of the study, and that stance needs to open to the reality that not only is representation constituted in claims and ascriptions of formal and informal representatives but that the formal representation always already is enmeshed in social relations and discourses that shape representative claims and/or ascriptions. From that perspective, the question for participation practices is how communicative practices organize themselves into representative relationships.
Figure 9.1 sketches a rough model of communication forms of representative–constituent relationships that were salient during the CCG. Because this study revealed that there is no single type of stakeholder (i.e., constituent), no single type of representation (i.e., representative), and no single issue through which constituents and representative relate, Figure 9.1 is a dynamic stakeholder map, with the issue at stake at its center. Distilled from the multiplicity of events, interactions, and structures of the CCG process, the map is contextualized, yet general enough that it has value for participation processes writ large. Moreover, as with other declarations in this report, Figure 9.1 is open to amendment, and should be refined, expanded, and challenged in light of findings from situated studies of other participation processes, as well as in contexts of nonpublic stakeholder governance (e.g., in corporations).

Roles and performances of representative and representation are demonstrably important to practices of participation at a practical level, but they also raise critical questions about symbols in collective life. Central to the influence of participation on transforming stakeholder relations in the public sphere are the representations that are made of stakeholders by stakeholders in performing formal and informal representative roles. Naming forms of representation, however, is only a first step towards better understanding of representative claims and ascriptions, in participation and other forms of governance; the forms of representative claims and ascriptions identified in this study (see Chapter 7) are not final, or even, at this point, very deep. Further research on significant symbols in other contexts of representation will be required to construct workable concepts and understandings of representation. Saward’s (2010) typology of representative claims (see Chapter 7) is a good starting point for grounded investigation of representatives and representation, but caution must be taken to not allow such maps (including those offered in this report) to define the field of practice.
Figure 9.1.

A Dynamic Stakeholder(s) Map

A Map of the Map

- The center circle represents common issues and interests/stakes, the meanings of which are contested and multifaceted.
- Larger circles touching the inner circle are formal representatives; smaller circles are types of stakeholder–representative relationships (see stakeholder–representative relationships below).
- Black rings are structural boundaries: the inner circle contains representatives developing (if not approving) policy, the next level includes representative and constituents (see below), and stakeholders outside the last ring are without direct relation to the participatory process group.
- Circles at the top of the figure are individuals and groups who, in some way, are a part of and apart from the participatory group; those positions might be occupied by staff, researchers, media, and facilitator. People and organizations in such relations also may be stakeholder constituents.

Stakeholder–Representative Relationships

1. The Loner: A stakeholder representative with no constituency; possible but rare (e.g., individual property owner)
2. The Coalition: Stakeholders with similarly defined interests in horizontal voluntary relations (e.g., organized conservation groups)
3. The Powers: Stakeholders with legal authority, and (generally) organized hierarchically (e.g., public administration agency and city council)
4. Gathers: A stakeholder category is named and others identifying with that category are drawn into relations, although some members of the category never may be reached (e.g., unorganized stakeholders)
5. Amalgamations: A stakeholder category is named and existing organized interests come together under a common banner (e.g., The Recreation Caucus)

Stakeholder Relations to Stakeholder Process Group

1. Loner: A private interest that is directly part of the group
2. Coalition: Many stakeholders from the constituency attend collaborative meetings and interact equally with their interest’s representative(s)
3. Powers: The authority that this representative stands for may inject him or herself as he or she pleases, but always with consequences
4. Gathers: Stakeholders have a range of relations, from acknowledging the collaboration to being active participants at meetings; communication networks between stakeholders may be weak
5. Amalgamations: Primarily organized interest groups whose majority of membership is outside the process; some members are very active in the process, whereas others stay informed through relations and public communication; and multiple communication networks may exist
Decision Making: Symbols and Governance

Decision making in/through participation rarely is the subject of theoretical or practical study. Neither outcomes of participation in the form of policy proposals and/or actions, or processes and conditions that influence decision making have been conceptualized or investigated in great depth. The lack of attention to decision making in processes of participation, in part, is a consequence of participation in practice being primarily idealized and enacted as a form of public education and/or a means to gather informed public opinions. Major claims about transformation in participation theory, rooted in the educational/informational model of participation, hold that interaction with others who have different opinions and histories will expand individuals’ perceptions of self-interest, public issue knowledge, and political efficacy. In practice, however, educative/informational forums, at best, may have a decision/choice-making exercise, but those decisions are nonbinding and often irrelevant to people’s daily lives and their relations with/as stakeholders. More sophisticated decision-making processes of participation exist, but, to date, little has been said about how and/or why participation processes result in the choices that they do. In concluding the present survey of lessons for participation theory and practice drawn from the CCG, a few reflections on the group’s decision making are offered below.

Two main conclusions from the CCG’s decision-making phase (but it was not a decision-making moment) are paramount. First, as discussed in Chapter 8, the CCG’s decision-making stage, as with all of the other stages during the process, was not confined to CCG members but also applied to decision makers and the public at large. In the CCG, members presented their “preliminary plan” to the public, which provided immediate feedback in the form of spoken public comments. Following public comment, the CCG, as a group, returned to its proposals,
and worked to refine them. After the CCG made its decision on the group’s proposals, the CCG’s plan was put before the OSBT. Taking account of further public testimony, the OSBT approved the CCG’s proposals (and the WTSA plan, as a whole) without many significant changes. The OSBT, however, is a standing advisory board to the Boulder City Council (BCC), which had the final word on the WTSA plan. Unlike OSBT members, the BCC did seek major changes to the WTSA plan proposal, but that process fell outside of the story of the CCG presented in this investigation.

In the decision-making stage, participation is likely to involve group members, official decision makers, and the public at large, each playing a different role at different moments. Participation theory and practice must account for all of those actors and their possible influences, starting with decision makers. Chapters 4 and 6 showed that OSBT members recognized how their role in the CCG’s decision-making phase could affect the CCG process, as well as long-term stakeholder relations in the community. Early in the process, the OSBT made clear that its authority to alter the CCG’s proposals was unyielding, but OSBT members, drawing on their experiences as members of the public during other planning processes, also expressed their commitment to making only limited changes to the CCG’s proposals. Such ideals should be explored further in practices of participation, and, when possible, compared with decision makers who seek significant control of and/or intervene into a participatory group’s proposals.

The role of the other two parties in decision making—group members and the public at large—was not discussed much during the CCG, but a few lessons can be gleaned from what those parties did/said during the decision-making stage. CCG members, during the Preliminary Plan Open House, for instance, were quick to cast each other as failing to participate in the CCG with good intentions, statements whose truth was questionable, but certainly had the effect of
casting the CCG’s proposals, and the CCG, as less than ideal. Such criticisms of CCG members, by CCG members, raised (or raised again) questions about the legitimacy of the CCG process, and, by extension, about decisions emerging from that process. Criticisms of CCG members, by CCG members, all but invited their constituencies to reject the CCG’s proposals out of hand, which many constituents were predisposed to do.

The second major conclusion about decision-making stages during participation distilled from the CCG concerns operational terms of participation in practice, such as those discussed in Chapter 8. Among the many interesting and unexpected events/conversations that occurred during the CCG, the most stunning, in content and impact, was the discussion about concepts such as “nonconsensus” and “no recommendation,” and the concrete items of the “CCG plan” and the “WTSA Plan.” The obvious lesson from the CCG about operational terms of participation in practice is that those concepts should be defined early and revisited often, to mitigate against the tragic implosion of participation that nearly afflicted the CCG. During the CCG, as discussed in Chapter 8, both pairs of terms just mentioned were discussed at the outset of the process, but concern for them was demonstrably absent during most of the CCG. Not all of the challenges that appeared in the CCG’s final conversation would have been avoided by defining different decision-making options but all concerned parties could have better managed and assessed the CCG’s ongoing work during the process if the group’s decisions could have been fitted into clearly defined categories.

CCG members’ attempts to define the categories of decisions post hoc revealed much about how and why the CCG was constituted and proceeded during its life span. The discussion that closed the CCG certainly was a conversation worth having, but as evidenced in Chapter 8, not discussing critical terms of the CCG’s decision-making process (e.g., what it meant if an
issue was not talked about at all) left unstated important stances to the process that might influence how participation occurred. In the CCG’s final conversation, not only did some members state, for the first time, that their actions during the CCG were guided by unstated assumptions about the decision making but that, for some members, those assumptions might have influenced their willingness to participate in the CCG at all. If accountability to constituents and decision makers during participation is necessary, the only reliable means of doing so is to begin such a process by establishing metrics for assessment of roles and responsibilities of all parties, and to proceed by conducting constant evaluation of all parties’ performance of those roles and responsibilities. Analysis of the CCG suggests that, in theory and practice, participation processes should give more attention to the possibility of multiple types of decisions, not only at the conclusion of the process but during the process, as parts of larger decisions are completed. It may be that the CCG raised all the possible types of decisions (i.e., consensus, nonconsensus, no recommendation, and not discussed), but other types may have existed. More study of processes of participation in practice, thus, are needed to discover other types of decisions that were not revealed by the CCG. The next section considers some of the lessons and constraints on those types of investigations taken from this study of the CCG.

Methodological Lessons and Constraints

Situated participation theory and research, it has been said, is too theoretical, too resource intensive, and too ambiguous for situated assessment of its claims. What rarely is asked is what value is provided by the alternative (i.e., traditional structural orientations and social-scientific data and interpretations), which, despite at least 20 years of research, continues to be described by supporters of participation as impractical. Participation research on the hyphen of theory–practice (i.e., theoretically informed and attentive to practice) has long been called for by
researchers and practitioners, but such investigations are rare. The lack of situated study of participation limits not only what is understood about participation in practice but, itself, is a barrier to conducting situated research. The uniqueness of every participation process, at first, appears to imply that there is no way to devise general ideals for practical participation research but that is not the case. It is possible, in many ways, to identify and attend to similarities between different sites of participation and different participation designs. Furthermore, general frameworks for situated participation research, and ways of rearticulating normatively derived research questions, such that they can be assessed in practice, are widely available. What is not possible is to do any of that work without studying participation in practice.

Growth in research designs and methods needed to study participation in practice from a theoretically informed position (i.e., not descriptive research) are tied to conducting such research. Theorists and researchers, preferably, in partnership with practitioners, must develop a discourse of field methods for situated participation investigations from lessons learned by doing such research. The tools that are necessary to investigate and organize given practical study, as well as the body of practical studies, will not be developed in the abstract but, instead, alongside investigations. Below, I sketch some lessons learned during this study about situated participation research. Because this study was not concerned, principally, with how to do situated participation research, these lessons are representative of research design and methodological ideals that can be distilled from any situated participation research.

Perhaps the most important conclusion from this study of the CCG concerning the study of participation in situ, generally, is that, for the foreseeable future, participation research in context first will be emergent and only later foundational. Researchers may enter the field with certain assumptions from theory, but research in/of practice always should be grounded in local
meanings, even, or especially when, those meanings conflict with conceptual ideals. Although it will be best to take a pragmatic orientation to methods and methodologies, employing thinking and tools that are suited to the situations studied and questions asked, there are some processes and perspectives from which, at a level, any situated study of the roles and influences of language and communication in participation would benefit.

First, following Cheney (1991), situated participation researchers attentive to language and communication must understand “the complete history of a corporate ‘voice’ to understand [the firm’s] message deeply” (p. 164). Intended to capture the breadth of discourses about a collective’s relevant symbols in a bounded organization, understanding of messages cannot be limited to one voice in the public sphere; all individual and collective voices influentially using and interpreting symbols relevant to a participation process are needed. It is not possible to say in the abstract exactly which voices will be relevant locally (or even what relevant local voices will best inform a given study) but the types of stakeholders identified (e.g., decision makers, organized interests, and individuals) and the structure of the databases used in the present study offer good first steps in moving toward general principles.

At a minimum, there are three types of “voices” or discourses that intersect in situated participation that researchers much understand to engage in informed analysis and to make informed interpretations of local talk and texts: the policy, environment, and group. As a set, the policy, environment, and group intersection (PEGI) does not define what data are collected but from which local discourse data are collected. Policy discourse data can include plans, rules, studies, or anything else that formally defines the issues at stake; an openness to various sources is important, but policy data, primarily, are official governing documents. Environment discourse data are information about how people locally use and interpret symbols that are
relevant in/to policy data, and they can include material from public meetings, media reports, interviews, or other sources, with decision makers and public stakeholders both being sources of environment data. Finally, *group discourse data* is information about the participation process, itself, including planning documents, meeting minutes, recorded talk, and other materials; such data may overlap with environment data (e.g., the CCG midcourse review). Gathering data to fill PEGI’s slots, foremost, is a way to organize the diffused communication that constitutes a discourse, after which analysis and interpretation can move in many directions to respond to an infinite number of practical and theoretical questions. Among the most important questions that such data can respond to concern the potential of transformation through participation.

Studying transformation requires a sustained involvement in a local community that is engaged in participation within a specific policy discourse; little else will provide the necessary baseline of existing discourse and practices, opportunity to observe change of those elements, evidence of sustained transformation at the individual and/or social levels, and time to gather data in which claims are grounded. With respect to conducting and reporting research, those are huge obstacles, particularly given that even minimal levels of usable data require extensive efforts over prolonged periods. Therefore, researchers and practitioners must find a way to integrate the longitudinal demands of practical participation research with the short-term demand for informative research products.

There are many ways to satisfy competing interests with respect to the conduct and results of participation research in situ, and the one offered here attempts to respond, simultaneously, to researchers’ need for quality data and to stakeholders’ need for relevant information. Participation practices are woefully underinformed by solid, independent research, and correcting that situation should be of paramount importance; it is not a little disingenuous for
advocates to claim that participation is practical when practical information about participation and those who practice participation remains thin. Therefore, in addition to the difficult work of aligning theoretical expectations with practical processes of participation, scholars need to integrate their investigations with processes of participation.

Investigators of participation who are committed to local communities should be active stakeholders in the participatory process, seeking at a minimum, to inform the process, as the process informs research. Due to its implied stance of intervention, some researchers will reject this proposal out of hand and others, all too quickly, will rush to tell local stakeholders how participation should be done. It is not my place, or the place of anyone outside the community studied, to dictate how people should engage with a participatory process, not the least because the local situation is going to determine what role, if any, researchers might have in an ongoing process of participation. Whether as an insider or as an outsider, or whether intervening or observing, there are definite actions that researchers can take that will be both constructive for the participation process studied and for research investigations. One of the most important questions to address is how to bridge the space between the public’s need for information about participation and researchers’ need for contextualized information.

Bridging the needs of the public and those of researchers deserve more attention than can be given here, and they are more diverse than the single example that follows regarding the production and distribution of transcripts. Transcripts are effective resources for capturing and transmitting generally unbiased information about interaction, as they (should) faithfully represent what was said during such interaction. Transcripts cannot capture all relevant information but for the dual purposes of informing stakeholders and building a database for research, no form is better suited. Recordings, from which transcripts are made, can be more
informative than the transcripts themselves, but to be of use, recordings require listening (or reading closed captions) as events unfold in real time, which could be several hours. Similarly, field notes or summary reports are quick to read, but they offer far less information than do transcripts, and they are quite limited as verifiable data sources for public use. With the exception of the time necessary to create a transcript of talk, and, particularly, group talk, transcripts are the most efficient and effective tool to keep stakeholders informed about a participation process, and to slowly build a critical resource for later investigations.

Importantly, to find transcripts useful tools of investigation, researchers need not be interested in communication, generally, or in the more intricate forms of communicative practices reported in this study. For example, in future analysis of transcripts from the CCG, I intend to look at the CCG’s structure as it was designed and how it adapted to events in the environment. Without transcripts, many details leading to changes in the CCG’s structure would have been lost or buried deeply in recordings of the group’s meetings. In closing this discussion of lessons from the preceding analysis of the CCG, the following section addresses some of the constraints of this report that offer lessons for future studies.

Many of the constraints on this study were conditions of the uniqueness of both its subject and object of study (i.e., the CCG and stakeholder categories), and, principally, at the intersections of the two. One major constraint in-between the study’s subject and object was the nonexistent time and limited public information that was available for preparation before fieldwork began. Just a few days passed between I learned about the plan for the CCG and the first related meeting, and before the CCG meetings began, there was very little information available about the process, particularly about the CCG caucus meeting. The fitful and dramatic unfolding of the CCG would have unwound any tightly explicated question posed at its
beginning, but research planning still is a useful exercise in emergent research designs. For example, with foreknowledge of the structures and processes of the caucus meeting, I may have been able to gather data from more of the caucuses that I was not able to attend. The lack of a recording of the Southern Neighborhood Caucus is a particularly frustrating gap, which might have been avoided with more information and time for reflection.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this study and report is the absence of personal accounts, both about the CCG process and the relevant stakeholder categories. Interviews, like all data-collection methods, have their limitations as forms of data and as data sources, but they also can offer interesting insights. It should be repeated that many CCG and OSMP staff members offered and/or did talk one-on-one with me, and although those conversations were not used as data in this report, they were highly informative and served as checks on my emerging analysis and interpretations. When I speak of a lack of interviews here, I mean, principally, structured and/or semistructured interviews that generate comparable statements. Not having interviews compelled the report to respond to its central concerns about categories and transformation from a different (and, I would argue, better) perspective than had I conducted interviews, but even the revised approach would have benefited from discussions with stakeholder representatives about stakeholders, the CCG, and Open Space. For example, in an interview that I did conduct, a CCG member told me that anyone who wants to visit the WTSA is an Open Space stakeholder. When I probed him about that claim, he did not waver much, holding to a position that not all CCG members would support, a difference in use and interpretation of the category of stakeholder that, likely, was of some significance to the CCG. Without interviews, I could not explore those types of questions, and, perhaps, this report suffers at the margins from their absence.
Another limitation concerns tensions between ideals of ethnography and discourse analysis (DA), a constraint that shifts depending on the standpoint assumed. Putting aside tensions over theory, action-implicative DA (K. Tracy, 2005) and the discourse-historical approach (Wodak, 2001) proved to be a useful combination attentive to macrolevel social discourse, interactional talk, and ethnographic sensitivities and sensibilities. In practice, the practical utility of those approaches came at the cost of ideals about ethnographic depth and DA ideals about interaction. An inherently wavering line, the depth versus breath construction of this study’s narrative is self-evident. The degree of strain, however, appears to be due to the attempt to capture the fullest scale and scope of the CCG in terms of relevant categories and the process, itself.

Conclusion

Theorists and researchers studying participation tend to assume that if a participation process is well designed and facilitated, as was the CCG, the transformative outcomes expected from participation will result. This research study has shown that such assumptions are misguided, for, in practice, participation needs to be continually thought and rethought as the process, and that participants adapt to their changing policy and relational environment. At the level of decision making, Karpowitz and Mansbridge (2005) called this ideal “dynamic updating,” in which “participants . . . continually and consciously update their understandings of common and conflicting interests” (p. 1). Dynamic updating, as defined by Karpowitz and Mansbridge, is important because “too much emphasis on the creation of shared values and solidarity can make it difficult to tease out underlying conflicts” (p. 7). Meant to disrupt premature or unreflective consensus, the ideal of dynamic updating can be extended to structures
and processes of participation writ large, and to theoretical and empirical approaches to participation.

When the perfect designs of participation forwarded in theory and research buckle in practice, it is important that ideals of participation design and research flex. This study has shown that categories, communication, and collectivity can assist in understanding and supporting structures of participation, even as those structures strain and snap in practice. In a sense, this study shows that categories, communication, and collectively are among the best tools for both supporting and critiquing participatory processes in theory and research, and, consequently, they should be among the first principles for reimagining governance in practice from a participatory standpoint.
Chapter 9 Notes

1 An exception should be made for Deliberative Polling (see Fishkin, 2009; Mansbridge, 2010), which involves a random, representative sample from a defined population or region, facilitated interaction of the sample in small groups, and measurement of changes in opinion and/or learning gained through participation. The purpose of Deliberative Polling is to generate an informed public opinion survey of conclusions that the public would make if the public had the opportunity to deliberate. Deliberative Polling, thus, succeeds in being practical and quasiexperimental, but does so by being unsituated and, therefore, disconnected from everyday experience.
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### Appendix A

**Official Meetings Related to the Community Collaborative Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Purpose of meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 30, 2011</td>
<td>BCC</td>
<td>Final vote on WTSA Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15, 2001</td>
<td>BCC</td>
<td>Public Hearing on WTSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 6, 2011</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Final Negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15, 2010</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Study Session with CCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 9, 2010</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting (Video)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Preliminary Plan Open House</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 15, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Negotiate West TSA-wide Preliminary Package</td>
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<td>November 9, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Negotiate West TSA-wide Preliminary Package</td>
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<td>October 26, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Negotiate West TSA-wide Preliminary Package</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 12, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>CCG Shanahan / South Mesa Subarea</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 28, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>CCG Shanahan / South Mesa Subarea</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 13, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Mountain Biking (entire West TSA)</td>
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<td>September 1, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>CCG Chautauqua / Flatirons Subarea</td>
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<td>August 16, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>CCG Chautauqua / Flatirons Subarea</td>
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<td>August 4, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>CCG Flagstaff / Western Mountain</td>
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<td>July 21, 2010</td>
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<td>CCG Flagstaff / Western Mountain</td>
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<td>July 7, 2010</td>
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<td>CCG Sanitas Anemone Red Rocks</td>
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<td>June 17, 2010</td>
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<td>CCG Sanitas Anemone Red Rocks</td>
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<td>June 26, 2010</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Scheduled Retreat</td>
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<td>June 9, 2010</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting (CCG midcourse update)</td>
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<td>June 2, 2010</td>
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<td>CCG Sanitas Anemone Red Rocks</td>
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<td>March 15, 2010</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Key Destinations and Desired Future Conditions</td>
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<td>NLS</td>
<td>Second Neighborhood Listening Session</td>
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<td>Visioning and Work Planning</td>
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<td>Collaborative Learning, Special Topics</td>
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<td>December 10, 2009</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Recreational Resources</td>
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<td>December 9, 2009</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting</td>
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<td>December 3, 2009</td>
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<td>Natural and Cultural Resources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4, 2009</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>Field Trip (Cancelled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2009</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 23, 2009</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>West TSA Sideboards and Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 21, 2009</td>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>First Neighborhood Listening Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 14, 2009</td>
<td>CCG</td>
<td>CCG Kick off and Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15, 2009</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12, 2009</td>
<td>OSMP</td>
<td>Caucuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 17, 2009</td>
<td>OSMP</td>
<td>CCG Information Meeting (Reclaiming conversation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 8, 2009</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting (CCG plan discussed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13, 2009</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting (Proposed CCG plan introduced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 22, 2009</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting (First mention of CCG embryo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2008</td>
<td>OSBT</td>
<td>Regular Meeting (pre-CCG references to “community meetings”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entities listed under the heading “group meeting” are the Community Collaboration Group (CCG), the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT), the Neighborhood Caucus (NLS), and the Boulder City Council (BCC). Descriptions of the purpose of the CCG meetings were taken directly from the Open Space and Mountain Parks CCG “Meetings” page (http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13324&Itemid=3763) with minor editing.
Appendix B

Source Documents of Databases

Group Database

- Community Collaborative Group Meetings 110 hours
- OSBT Study Session Summer 2010 (6/10) 2 hours
- OSBT Retreat Summer 2010 (6/10) 2.5 hours

Discourse Database


Environment Database

Policy document [Note: During the Community Collaborative Group process, these documents were available on OSMP’s website. They have since been removed. ]

Public comment response summary - Visitor Master Plan
Eldorado Mountain / Doudy Draw Trail Study Area 8/22/06 Public Meeting Notes
Eldorado Mountain / Doudy Draw Trail Study Area Plan Public Meeting Notes 8/29/06
Public Comments on the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Alternatives Report at the September 8, 2005 Meeting
“Sticky Note” Public Comments on the Draft Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Trail Study Area Plan Received at the November 15, 2005 Meeting
Public comments received via e-mail on the draft report on trail alternatives for the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Trail Study Area (TSA) as of 9/22/05 (and additiona-comments.pdf)

Public Comment Highlights from the 11/15/05 Meeting on the Draft Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Trail Study Area (TSA) Plan

Public Comments on the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Alternatives Report at the September 8, 2005 Meeting

Summary of Public Responses to the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Trail Study Area (TSA) Questionnaire 8/12/05

Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) Minutes Retrieved from http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2783&Itemid=1090 [Note: At time of publication of this report, the OSBT website contained only 2010-2012 minutes. At the time of research presented in this report, the OSBT website contained 2003-2011 OSBT meeting minutes]

2011
January 19, February 23, March 6

2010
January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9, August 11, August 25, September 22, October 27, November 10, December 9

2009
January 14, March 11, April 22, May 13, June 2, June 24, July 8, August 12, October 14, November 4, December 9

2008
January 9, February 13, March 12, April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, August 27, September 10, October 15, December 1

2007
January 24, February 28, March 14, March 28, April 11, May 9, May 22, June 27, July 25, August 8, September 26, October 10, November 14, December 12

2006
January 11, February 8, March 8, April 17, May 10, May 16, July 12, August 23, September 13, October 11, October 25, December 13

2005
January 12, January 26, February 9, February 23, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 22, July 27, August 11, September 28, October 19, November 9, November 16, December 14

2004
January 7, January 28, February 11, February 25, March 10, April 13, May 26, June 9, June 23, July 28, August 12, September 8, September 22, October 13, November 10, December 8

2003
January 8, January 22, February 12, May 7, June 11, June 25, July 9, July 23, November 12, December 12
Appendix C

Human Subjects Protection

Exempt Certification

Konieczka, Stephen
Protocol #: 11-0436
Title: Representation and community collaboration

Dear Stephen Konieczka,

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed this protocol and determined it to be of exempt status in accordance with Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46.101(b). Principal Investigators are responsible for informing the IRB of any changes or unexpected events regarding the project that could impact the exemption status. Upon completion of the study, you must submit a Study Closure via eRA. It is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to implementing any changes.

Certification Date: 21-Dec-2011
Exempt Category: 2
Associated Documents: * Protocol; consent form; Initial Application - eForm v4;
Number of subjects approved: 30

* Approved documents can be found by logging into the eRA system, opening this protocol, and navigating to the "Versions" folder.

The IRB has reviewed this protocol in accordance with federal regulations, university policies and ethical standards for the protection of human subjects. In accordance with federal regulation at 45 CFR 46.112, research that has been approved by the IRB may be subject to further appropriate review and approval or disapproval by officials of the institution. The investigator is responsible for knowing and complying with all applicable research regulations and policies including, but not limited to, Environmental Health and Safety, Scientific Advisory and Review Committee, Clinical and Translational Research Center, and Wardenburg Health Center and Pharmacy policies.

Please contact the IRB office at 303-735-3702 if you have any questions about this letter or about IRB procedures.

Institutional Review Board
Appendix D

“Flatirons” Imagery and Names”