Multiscale approach to biodiversity conservation: Chicago as a case study

# Scales of Change

## Book of abstracts

*Commemorating 50 years of*
*Landscape Architecture study programme*
*at University of Ljubljana*

University of Ljubljana

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## Content

**ID 20: Multiscale approach to biodiversity conservation: Chicago as a case study**

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Biodiversity loss is a major global concern, strictly connected to heterogeneous phenomena occurring at various spatial and temporal levels. A multiscale approach to biodiversity conservation is therefore crucial to better understand and manage ecological dynamics and processes. Scholars agree that a joint effort of decision-makers, planners, and designers is necessary to successfully integrate the conservation of biological diversity into sustainable development strategies from the national to the local scale.

Among the many cities that are worldwide adopting biodiversity-aimed policies and plans, Chicago stands for its forward-looking approach to environmental conservation, whose antecedents can be found at the turn of the 20th century, when the *Forest Preserves of Cook County* were established in the Chicago metropolitan region. The institution of this system of protected sites became the framework for the foundation of the regional alliance *Chicago Wilderness* in 1996, that aimed at bringing together organisations, policy-makers, landowners, and citizens to implement the quality of delicate ecosystems and conservation areas. In 1999 the alliance produced an innovative document for that time: the *Biodiversity Recovery Plan* (BRP) for the greater Chicago region. It was followed in 2004 by its spatial representation, the *Green Infrastructure Vision*, that identified priority areas to be protected, restored, and connected. In order to implement the BRP regional goals at the urban level, in 2006 the City of Chicago developed its first *Nature and Wildlife plan* (updated in 2011) to preserve and restore habitats within the city.

Proposing the experience of Chicago as a best practice, the paper will address the complex system of tools adopted to tackle the loss of biological diversity from regional to municipal level. Through the analysis of a selection of contemporary landscape architecture projects implemented in Chicago, the paper will highlight the productive and mutual influence of landscape planning and design in biodiversity conservation.