BACKCOUNTRY IDENTITY AND THE PROPOSED SUNRISE

POWERLINK PROJECT

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in

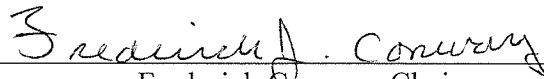Anthropology

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by

Janet Elaine Michaels

Spring 2010

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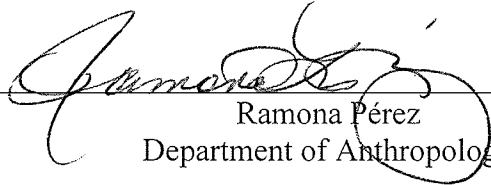

The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Janet Elaine Michaels
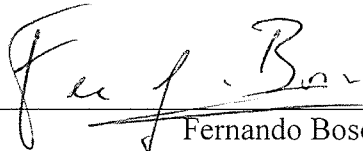

Backcountry Identity and the Proposed Sunrise Powerlink Project

_____
Frederick Conway, Chair
Department of Anthropology

_____
Ramona Pérez
Department of Anthropology

_____
Fernando Bosco
Department of Geography

_____
Approval Date

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Backcountry Identity and the Proposed Sunrise Powerlink Project
by
Janet Elaine Michaels
Master of Arts in Anthropology
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This thesis examines a segment of the modern American population residing in northern eastern San Diego County. This area, sometimes referred to as "the backcountry," although relatively close to the urban and suburban areas of San Diego County, is difficult to access due to narrow and winding two-lane roads. Possibly residents of this rural area have constructed senses of identity and place that differ from those of city and suburban residents.

These particular senses of identity and place may have been heightened by a 2005 proposal to construct a major electrical power line known as the "Sunrise Powerlink" through the area. This power line's proposed route involved significant use of public lands as well as parklands. Resistance to construction was high among local residents as well as larger organizations such as conservation and utility watchdog organizations. The prospect of the power line presented an opportunity for local residents to examine and voice issues surrounding their place, values and identity, regardless of their level of involvement in the debate.

This thesis describes the history of the proposed power line as well as the history of the area surveyed. It presents the results of twenty-one interviews of residents in mid- to late 2008. These interviewees were opponents of the Powerlink but the level of participation in public protest varied substantially. These interviews, as well as written discourse on the subject of the Powerlink, reveal the bodily experience of place these residents revealed as well as the sense of authenticity their place held for them. Issues of the appropriate use of space are also analyzed, as is the constructed meaning of the term "backcountry." Although the interviewees emphasized the diversity of residents of this area, common themes and values were revealed, as was the collective identity and narrative that formed around the opposition.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those residents of eastern San Diego County who took the time to speak frankly with me about their homes, their values, and the proposed Sunrise Powerlink project. I would especially like to thank those who guided me to more interviewees. I am filled with admiration for all those who have taken the time and physical and emotional energy required to oppose the project as well as those who have strived to remain well-informed on current issues.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee: Dr. Frederick Conway, Dr. Ramona Pérez, and Dr. Fernando Bosco for their time and energy in helping me formulate my ideas and bringing this thesis to fruition.

And lastly, I would like to thank my sister, Carolyn F. Corwin, whose editorial comments were frank and exceptionally helpful.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I moved from north coastal San Diego County to a house in east central San Diego in August 2005. The "new" house was, in fact, a circa 1950 tract home in need of ongoing maintenance and improvement. Rather than starting with the obvious improvements, such as a new heater and the addition of air conditioning, I chose to install solar panels to provide "green" electricity for the house. Given the southern exposure of the roof and the largely electric nature of the appliances, this seemed like the obvious first step to me.

As I began to consider possible thesis topics, I was drawn to the idea of investigating American cultural attitudes toward green power in general. Aside from the obvious expense barriers, why did the notion of solar paneling appeal to me so much while to others it had little or no appeal? I had explored the topic of alternative energy and local attitudes through a paper I wrote for the applied anthropology seminar and noticed that there was little anthropological literature addressing the topic of green energy and cultural values anywhere in the world, much less in the United States. I was also attracted by the idea of investigating a more typical applied anthropology topic, such as the impact of dam construction on various stakeholders.

In August 2006, I was driving to Borrego Springs, a desert community about two hours east of San Diego. I had visited this town once or twice a year for about fifteen years, mostly in the summer when the town was nearly deserted. My route to Borrego Springs on this particular trip took me through Ramona and Santa Ysabel. As I passed the fields at the intersection of Routes 79 and 76, I noticed some large signs (see Figure 1). The signs referred to the local electric utility, San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), to the "Park" and to some kind of threat. The signs urged viewers to visit "peoplespowerlink.org" to learn more about the issue.

I looked at the website as suggested, and found that the perfect thesis topic already existed. SDG&E had recently proposed construction of a major power line referred to as the "Sunrise Powerlink", stretching from Imperial County, east of San Diego County, and

Figure 1. One of several signs in Santa Ysabel, California. September 2008.

westward through Borrego Springs and the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, over the mountains and into the city of San Diego. According to SDG&E, the new line would be used to transport "green" electricity rather than the more traditional natural gas power. However, it was clear from the signs and the website that although "green" power may sound good in theory, not everyone was enthused about this project. In particular, many residents of the eastern portions of San Diego County most likely to be impacted by the construction and existence of the power line were incensed by the potential damage that could be done to their lives and property.

Although initially I intended to treat my investigation of the proposed project as a "true" applied anthropology topic and interview all stakeholders, including supporters and opponents, SDG&E employees, city and rural residents and business owners and politicians impacted by the line, I eventually decided to narrow the scope of the effort and concentrate on residents of the backcountry areas who would be most affected by the project. This was particularly attractive to me personally as a long-time visitor to Borrego Springs and the State

Park. I had also frequently visited or passed through other towns that would potentially be affected by the construction of the huge lines and towers. Along with the issues associated with the power project, I became interested in exploring in depth why people chose to live in this part of the county. As a visitor, I had not gained a great deal of insight into the possible answers to this question. Therefore, I used the Sunrise Powerlink proposal as a "springboard" to examine the culture or cultures of the residents along the initial proposed route.

I was not sure at the start of this research that a clear picture of a distinct "culture" or "cultures" would emerge. San Diego's backcountry is not remote from the city (see Figure 2). The driving time to Borrego Springs, near the eastern border of the county is about 2 to 2 ½ hours from the city. Additionally, many former city residents now live in this eastern part of San Diego County, possibly bringing with them city values and desires. However, this portion of the county is far more rural than the coastal areas. The specific communities I was interested in present some access challenges; only two-lane roads lead in and out of each of the larger towns surveyed. This is true even of Ramona, which is relatively near to the suburb of Poway. Access roads twist and turn, climbing steadily from the city into Ramona, Julian and Ranchita and switchbacking down the mountains into Borrego Springs. None of these communities is close to a major highway; none serves as the home of a large corporation. The outlying nature of these towns as well as the access difficulties have served to segregate them and at least slow the growth of urban sprawl into their boundaries. It seemed possible that those who chose to live in these eastern communities might have developed a certain local sense of identity and perhaps some values that differ from the more urban mindset. Even formerly urban residents might have acquired these values, or been ready to acquire them upon arrival. Possibly the debate over the Sunrise Powerlink had thrown additional light on what values and identities were common to these residents.

The term "backcountry" is frequently used to refer to the eastern portion of San Diego County. Occasionally it is used in daily speech, but more frequently it appears in newspapers, magazines and on television news programs. It also appears in tourism advertising, particularly in reference to the Ramona/Julian/Borrego Springs area, where tourism supports a large part of the community. When I began this project, I expected this

Figure 2. San Diego County Map from County. Source: County of San Diego 2009 County of San Diego website. http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty/sandiego/map.html. Accessed August 22, 2009.

word would be commonly used in eastern San Diego County. Coming originally from the East Coast, where there is no equivalent term for the more rural areas, I expected it to be universal. Urged by Dr. Fred Conway, I decided to explicitly ask residents about this term.

I was also interested in examining how collective action, or at least a common cause, might have affected individual identification with the area. Do individuals feel that they identify more strongly with the larger geographic area threatened by the proposed Sunrise Powerlink construction, or is their primary affiliation with their particular town or area?

Therefore, the research came to involve investigation of attitudes of San Diego backcountry residents in the context of the Sunrise Powerlink proposal. I have been able to find no anthropological studies addressing the residents of this area and the values and beliefs that they hold; therefore, I felt I might be breaking new ground. I concluded that I needed to

explore some relatively broad questions about local identity/identities and values and hoped interviews and examination of written text would reveal answers to the following questions:

- Is there a distinct idea of a "backcountry" identity or identities among residents of San Diego's eastern, more rural regions?

- Are there perceived or identifiable differences among the backcountry communities, in other words, do the towns of the backcountry have distinct identities?

- How do backcountry residents think more urban people see them?

- Is the word "backcountry" even used by these residents?

- If there is a distinct identity associated with place, how does this fit with other identities residents may claim?

- What are some values that backcountry residents believe set them apart from the more urban residents of San Diego County?

- How have backcountry residents' senses of identity been impacted by collective action against the proposed Sunrise Powerlink project? Are the impacts perceived in different ways in the different communities, or according to level of participation in the collective action?

- What narratives and discourses have formed around this project among backcountry residents? Do these discourses relate to backcountry identity as defined by residents? How are these discourses related to larger discourses going on in American society today?

The methodology I used to obtain answers to these questions is described in further detail in the Methodology chapter. In brief, I interviewed twenty-one residents of several towns along the proposed route, using questions designed to gain insight into the research questions listed above. I also attended three public hearings regarding the Sunrise Powerlink before the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) as well as watching the final Commission approval meeting via web cast. Furthermore, I attended the second "Ranchita Rocks" fundraiser concert.

In addition to conducting interviews, I investigated the history of the affected areas as well as the history of the Sunrise Powerlink proposal. This investigation was necessary to properly understand general assumptions and attitudes about the backcountry as well as specific reactions to the proposed power line. I researched the history of Ramona, Julian and Borrego Springs using written history available through the San Diego State University library, both the regular stacks and Special Collections, and articles available through the San Diego Historical Society. A great deal of recent Ramona history was gathered from the

excellent SDSU history thesis, "Turmoil in Turkey Town" by David Tarr. Town chambers of commerce and census data as well as geography texts provided data about the present-day towns. The history of the Sunrise Powerlink proposal was gathered largely online. The California Public Utilities Commission maintains a large online library of project applications, protests, rebuttals, findings and decisions. Various websites describe the history in a more readable form. The San Diego Union-Tribune has also covered the proceedings and issues fairly thoroughly.

Although the people of the backcountry became the focus in this research, the issue of the Sunrise Powerlink continues to interest me and I think that it should be of interest to anyone who is wondering how the United States will make the transition to new energy sources. It has become clear in the last few years that the United States must take advantage of any and all non-fossil fuel energy sources possible. The question of how that energy will be distributed and transmitted is critical and divisive. The PBS program "NOW", broadcast January 16, 2009, featured the debate over the Sunrise Powerlink. The analysis presented in this program argued that while the Powerlink has been a local topic, hard choices lie ahead for the whole country. This project has served as a first attempt to address some of the hard issues that arise when "the people" and their values and cultures collide with ideas about the generation and transmission of green power.

Although the Sunrise Powerlink was approved by the CPUC in December 2008, the route finally chosen was further south in the county than the area I worked in. The approval has been challenged in court and the debate continues as residents of communities not previously affected have joined the protest. Other communities and states can expect to experience the same disagreements and legal battles as the infrastructure of power generation and power transmission changes.

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides an overview of some of the theoretical literature applicable to the topic. Chapter 3 describes the research methodologies employed in developing this thesis. Chapters 4 and 5 respectively supply the history and geography of the rural areas on the original proposed route of the Sunrise Powerlink and the history of the Powerlink proposal itself as well as arguments for and against the power line and groups of supporters and opponents. Chapter 6 reveals general findings and theoretical interpretations from the research. Chapter 7 presents a summary and conclusion. Appendices A, B and C

provide, respectively, additional information regarding interviewees, some practical lessons learned, and the informed consent document used in the ethical collection of data from human subjects.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL LITERATURE – PLACE,
IDENTITY AND NARRATIVE

There are three general theoretical areas that pertain to the subject of this research: place, identity and narrative. Each has been extensively covered by a number of theorists in many contexts. These areas overlap; place and identity may be interrelated, narrative may be about place or about "who we are."

THE NOTION OF PLACE

"Place" is a concept and a word that is used frequently. Many authors note how often phrases such as "looking out of place", "knowing one's place" and "a place for everything and everything in its place" are used in daily speech. However, the theoretical meaning and significance of place, as well as a common understanding of the definition of place, seem more complex, and have been addressed at length by scholars in various disciplines. "Place" is a term that has evoked both debate and discomfort, as well as poetic and romantic essays. Place is not an easy concept to define. As Clifford Geertz says, "No one lines up people and asks them to define "place" and list three examples of it. No one really has a theory of it. No one imagines that it is some sort of data set to be sampled, ordered, tabulated, and manipulated. To study place, or, more exactly, some people or other's sense of place, it is necessary to hang around with them..." (Geertz 1996: 260).

Place, Sense and Meaning

Some studies of place have put emphasis on the sensual nature of place. In other words, a "sense of place" involves seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting one's environment. Experience as well as emotion and thought give meaning to a particular place. Experience of place is both active and passive and involves sensory data taken in passively and the embodiment of the human being moving through and interacting with space in a particular place. Neither space nor place is empty and without meaning (Tuan 1977). A sense of place is an imaginative experience, not a mechanical process or a useful tool, and is

created of those aspects that are relevant to the place and the person and community (Feld and Basso 1996: 83). The experience of place is an experience of the body;

> Embodied space is the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form…a model for understanding the creation of place through spatial orientation, movement, and language. (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 2)

Places are strongly related to culture. "[A]s people fashion places, so, too, do they fashion themselves," (Feld and Basso 1996: 11). For Basso, places are a wonderful source of understanding for the ethnographer. "[P]laces possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become" (Feld and Basso 1996: 55).

> Naturally occurring depictions of places are treated as actualizations of the knowledge that informs them, as outward manifestations of underlying systems of thought, as native constructions wrought with native materials that embody and display a native cast of mind. (Feld and Basso 1996: 57)

Similarly, Feld says senses of place are culturally particular. He points out that the visual sensing of place is well-developed in Western thought, seen as artistic, scientific and measurable, while senses of place relating to other senses, such as hearing, are often overlooked (Feld 1996: 91).

Drawing on the works of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu and the school of phenomenology, philosopher Edward S. Casey describes the ways in which perception drives culture and culture drives perception. For Casey, place is a key concept; "places …gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts" (1996: 24). Casey posits that both place and region must have porous, elastic boundaries for the exchange of thoughts as well as goods (1996: 42).

Place as Symbol and Idea

Places are individually perceived or "sensed", but attributing meaning to a place is a social and cultural activity. Low (2000) distinguishes between the social *production* of space and the social *construction* of space. Social production refers to the many factors, "social, economic, ideological, and technological – that result…in the physical creation of the material setting", while

> [T]he social construction of space is the actual transformation of space – through peoples' social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting – into scenes and actions that convey meaning. (Low 2000: 127-128)

There may be more than one set of meanings attached to a particular space or place. In her discussion of contests over public space, specifically plazas in Costa Rica, Low theorizes that such contests are about competing meanings and values assigned to the space. Similarly, in her discussion of urban space, Margaret Rodman speaks of the conflict in values between economic value and use value that results in contested uses of spaces.

> In North America and Europe, the development of capitalism and the "local state" have been crucial in structuring space (e.g. Logan and Molotch 1987). Confrontation between entrepreneurs concerned with exchange values and residents concerned with use values, such as quality of life, must focus on "the complex articulation between symbolic universes of meaning, capital accumulation and space" and are crucial for the analysis of urban development. (Gottdiener 1985: 155; Rodman 2003 [1992]: 212)

Lynn Ross-Bryant (2005) discusses how a particular kind of place can be invested with symbolism that goes beyond personal or local cultural values and can encompass regional or national sensibilities. She analyzes how national parks such as Yosemite have become symbolic for Americans, in spite of the many physical changes in the parks and diverging goals within the Park Service. Her historical review of symbolism surrounding parks in the U.S. is particularly relevant for the subject of this paper. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, "the European aesthetic experience of the sublime that connected nature and culture had transformed in the United States into a religious experience of God in nature…" (Ross-Bryant 2005: 36). The natural wonders of the New World allowed the U.S. to claim equality with the cultural claims of the European countries. Additionally, the natural beauty of parks would be available to all citizens. In fact, during World War I, "park visitation was presented as a good American's duty" (Ross-Bryant 2005: 47). At the same time, parks are seen as unchanging and "immune to the passage of time and the imperfections of life in the world" (Ross-Bryant 2005: 53). Ross-Bryant argues that parks are identified as unchanging, sacred places in the United States. Parks are a symbol of patriotism, a symbol of American superiority (or equality), and are also places set aside as sacred locations. It has been problematic for the parks that they are both "sacred sites" and tourist attractions; expected to remain pristine, untouched and unchanging and yet generate revenues and provide locations for scientific research. Particularly since the middle of the

twentieth century, the role of the national parks in the United States has been increasingly contested as ecological studies have challenged the "unchanging" nature of the wilderness remaining in the country today, and park boundaries are increasingly recognized as artificial. Ross-Bryant suggests that the vision of parkland may be changing today, and that parks may be losing their significance in American society.

> If a transformation of symbols were to occur and the parks no longer embodied the eternal sublime or the pristine wilderness and were no longer seen as set apart from ordinary life, it is certainly possible that the result would …be…the loss of power of place or the power only of nostalgia, where one might glimpse an America of another time. (56)

Parks may become "museumized." A national discourse is currently in process regarding the meaning and importance of parkland in the United States.

Parks are an example of how places can be symbolic of ideas. Places may also come to symbolize certain ideals. Regardless of changes to a particular locale, ideas of a past way of life may be attached to certain places, giving them a meaning that is largely symbolic. As more and more people are geographically dispersed across the world, there is a modern loss of groundedness, of rootedness in which blurred memories of scattered communities are attached to imagined and remembered places (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 37). Stewart (1992) discusses how the disruption of the modern world has created nostalgias of many kinds, including the nostalgia "of and for local namable places" which serve to order an increasingly disordered and mobile world. Nostalgia is a cultural practice that is called into use "as culture becomes more and more diffuse" (252). In terms of political movements, this can have interesting consequences.

> Often enough, as in the contemporary United States, the association of place with memory, loss, and nostalgia plays directly into the hands of reactionary popular movements. This is true not only of explicitly national images long associated with the right but also of imagined locales and nostalgic settings such as "small town America" or "the frontier"… (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 41-42)

The Authenticity of Place

In *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Edward Relph sought to "explore place as a phenomenon of the geography of the lived-world of our everyday experiences" (Relph 1976: 6). Relph develops interesting, although debatable, thoughts about the identity of places. Some places he labels as "authentic;" others are "inauthentic". For Relph, an "authentic sense of place is above all that of being inside and belonging to *your* place both as an

individual and as a member of a community, and to know this without reflecting on it" (Relph 1976: 65). "Inauthentic" places are self-consciously constructed and reflect a sense of location rather than a sense of roots and being lived in. Relph is particularly harsh in his criticisms of tract housing, modern highways, and big business. Additionally, he decries what he refers to as "museumification" (recreating history in a romanticized fashion) as well as "disneyfication" (i.e. theme parks) and "futurisation" (World's Fair-type "visions of the future"). As well as being inauthentic, such places to Relph are actually "anti-place" - lacking human scale, destructive of place and indicative of impermanence and instability. Additionally, themes of power arise in the "preservation of a place. What is selected for preservation - in museums, monuments or buildings - has implications in terms of creation of a historical narrative for a specific place and for analysis of power relationships (Cresswell 2004: 85). For Relph, places should be related to those who live there and should contain meaning that makes sense to residents.

In Place/Out of Place

Since the meaning of any particular place is culturally constructed, the types of activities that are assumed to be appropriate to that place are also culturally determined. Tim Cresswell explores the "appropriate" use of space and issues of resistance and transgression in his book titled *In Place/Out of Place* (1996). In this volume, the overtones of the word "place" and the normative expectations that go along with it are investigated. Why are there "proper" uses for place? Why are some people or things deemed to be in the "wrong place"? Cresswell's themes in this book are transgression and "how space and place are used to structure a normative landscape" (Cresswell 1996: 8). He is concerned with what is defined as appropriate (or not) and how ideology is reinforced (or not) by transgression. Citing Bourdieu, he discusses the idea of "reasonable behavior" and the connection made between what is known as "common sense" and a sense of limits.

> A prime subject of social struggle, then, is the claim to legitimacy from opposing forms of commonsense classification. The dominating groups have an interest in defending the taken-for-grantedness of things - the prevailing doxa - while the dominated groups seek to push back the boundaries of what is taken as natural. (Cresswell 1996: 20)

Transgression is a violation of the taken-for-grantedness of things. Cresswell is careful to point out that transgression is not necessarily resistance, since resistance is

intentional, while transgression may not be. Regardless, transgression is "out of place".
The book addresses the concept of "deviance", the relationship to dirt ("matter out of place"
according to Mary Douglas), to disease and to moral deterioration and madness (Cresswell
1996: 38). Cresswell cites and expands on a number of examples in which things, people or
actions were deemed to be in the wrong place, and, one presumes, at the wrong time. "...the
meanings of places are historically constituted and vary through time. In each case the taken-
for-granted meanings of place were not natural but were socially and historically
constructed" (Cresswell 1996: 150).

In consonance with the in place/out of place discussion, Low speaks of constructing
difference through boundaries. While boundaries may be metaphoric or physical, Low cites
Bateson in theorizing that difference and contrast create boundaries. These differences and
contrasts are again constructed rather than given. A boundary is a "marked transition from
one sphere of control to another" (Low 2000: 154). These boundaries are arbitrary but allow
people to understand and make sense of the world. As Low says, however, "boundaries may
provide the logic for inclusion or exclusion" (Low 2000: 155).

The Porosity of Place – Global Capital and Networks

Various thinkers have examined the role of space and place in a globalizing world.
For Marxist geographer Doreen Massey (1997) place is an event, subject to openness and
change. For Massey, "places are about connections" (Cresswell 2004: 37). David Harvey,
on the other hand, speaks of "mobile capital" and "fixed place". The two, according to
Harvey, are in perpetual tension. For Harvey, place is a locus of constructed memories
linking people to the past (Cresswell 2004: 58). For Massey, community is far more mobile
and physical global movement is not necessarily negative or anxiety-producing. She sees a
close connection between place and a particular form of identity. For Harvey, place is
reactionary and exclusive, and for Massey it is a valid construct, with multiple and constantly
changing characters and identities. A different twist is taken on the Marxist viewpoint by
anthropologist Arturo Escobar, who posits that place is irrelevant to global capital, and that
the establishment of place may be a form of resistance (Cresswell 2004: 84).

Population mobility has greatly complicated thinking about the concept of place.
Writing for *Cultural Anthropology*, Renato Rosaldo addressed "the informal view and

...zones of cultural visibility and invisibility... [and] spatial organization within and between nations" (Rosaldo 1988: 78). In this article and in his volume titled *Culture and Truth* (1989), Rosaldo discussed the notion that culture is defined by difference. In this view, the more geographically remote and "strange" a group is, the more wonderful and fruitful it will be to study. Groups that have been geographically dispersed or heavily influenced by Western residents and travelers are much less interesting. For Rosaldo, this is not the case, and the circumstances of those who are immigrating, emigrating, and emerging is fascinating. Following Rosaldo, Gupta and Ferguson discuss the pitfalls of oversimplifying anthropology and ethnography, particularly as worldwide mobility increases. It is simply no longer true (if it ever was) that a single location and a single culture are synonymous (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 46). For these authors, community and identity involve processes of exclusion and othering and are always contested. They draw parallels between the politics of space and the politics of "otherness" as reflected in immigration law and tactics. They draw on Massey's work in developing a theme of the feminized local as artificially intruded upon by masculine global capital, and find culture to be in many ways "the battlefield in an ongoing 'war of position'" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a: 5).

In an attempt to synthesize some of the anthropological thinking about place and politics, Gavin Smith points out the pitfalls of looking at the culture of a particular place from a political perspective. He echoes Eric Wolf in directing the anthropologist to look at historical and current factors and forces that "give particular character to the way people think and act around the magnetic field of place." He goes on to warn that "...the danger lies in the answers coming always in the terms of the juggernaut of capital, rather than in the specifics of particular histories and specific places" (Smith 1999: 162). He asks whether struggle can actually create locality, but again warns that citizenship and culture are grounded in history (Smith 1999: 204).

One area of study in which the changing bonds between place and people is developing is in the area of "networks". Fernando Bosco takes Massey's approach in his examination of the networks within and between groups that allow effective transnational collective action for the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. "Place and spatial scale are now conceptualized as being open, porous, and networked, rather than as being fixed, essential, and hierarchical in nature" (Bosco 2001: 310). Networks are not necessarily

located in a particular place. Appadurai (2006) describes "cellular" systems, which are "mobile, recombinant, opportunistic and de-nationalized" as opposed to "vertebrate" systems, which are regulated and bounded (27). Networks are combinations of the two systems. Describing terrorist networks, Appadurai says they are "connected yet not vertically managed, coordinated yet remarkably independent, capable of replication without central messaging structures, hazy in their central organizational features yet crystal clear in their cellular strategies and effects…" (28). Place is no longer a discrete geographical territory but is an idea or ideal that serves to bond individuals and groups together in the network.

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THE NOTION OF IDENTITY

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The subject of identity - both cultural and personal - has also interested theorists. Liz Bondi describes how thinking about individual identity has developed historically. "Liberal humanism" is the theory that the subject is "centered, coherent and self-authored" (Bondi 1993: 86). In other words, each human being has a solid "essence" that does not change over time. However, Marx and Freud both saw processes - both class and psychical- as impacting all human subjects. For both these shapers of modern Western thought, identity is something to be discovered, through analysis of one's class and "true" self-interest in the case of Marx and in unearthing hidden thoughts and desires through psychotherapy in the case of Freud (Bondi 1993: 85-86).

This kind of self-exploration is similar to the "realist" theory of identity discussed by Satya Mohanty. Mohanty brings to the table the value of experience as a means of evaluation of identity. Struggling with the postmodern dilemma in which "nothing is known", Mohanty asserts that experience still has personal reality to individuals. By testing various identities against personal (and group) experience, both emotionally and logically, one can "claim" the identity that makes the most sense. However, Mohanty is careful to recognize that there may be constraints on what identities may be assumed by a given individual or culture.

> [I]n analyzing identity-based politics, claims about the general social significance of a particular identity should be evaluated together with its accompanying assumptions or arguments about how the current social or cultural system makes some experiences intelligible and others obscure or irrelevant, how it treats some

as legitimate sources of knowledge about the world while relegating others to the level of the narrowly personal. (Mohanty 2000: 63)

Similarly, Bondi summarizes some of the political issues associated with multiple and complex identities. She focuses on consciousness-raising, a technique associated with the women's movement in which women discuss their experiences and develop feminist identities (Mohanty discusses this kind of forum as well). While this kind of activity draws on the Marxist and Freudian approaches of self-analysis and recognition of societal oppression, it is also very simplified. Bondi describes how some early consciousness-raising efforts went beyond feminist identities as women added other self-identifiers, some of which were deemed of more "value" than that of feminism (particularly ethnic identities). Unfortunately, this has resulted in a tendency to use pre-ordained categories, rather than creating constructed identities, resulting in some fragmentation of political effort (Bondi 1993: 95).

The constraints on possible identities, as George Revill notes, are based to some degree on a Heidiggerian notion of community as static (1993: 119). In this view, community bounds identity through tradition and accepted culture and can easily subordinate individuals to notions of the collective good. The concept of a constricting society can also be attributed to Pierre Bourdieu. As Sherry Ortner says,

> For Bourdieu, the subject internalizes the structures of the external world, both culturally defined and objectively real. These internalized structures form a habitus, a system of dispositions that incline actors to act, think, and feel in ways consistent with the limits of the structure…the main emphasis of Bourdieu's arguments about habitus is on the ways in which it establishes a range of options and limits for the social actor. (2006: 109)

Ortner, in *Anthropology and Social Theory* (2006), draws on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, but asks how we can fit the concept of agency, or individual identity and action, into the larger theory of culture. The ability of human beings to "break out of the mould" is important to Ortner. The intentionality of agency is also critical although there is not a hard boundary between what Ortner refers to as "routine practices" and "agentive acts that intervene in the world with something in mind (or in heart)" (2006: 136). Ortner's focus on agency and intentional practice allows for the functioning of individual identity and action in a way Bourdieu's theory does not. Ortner reviews the work of many thinkers in a variety of disciplines, including Bourdieu, Giddens, Sahlins, Foucault, Scott, and Williams in coming

to the conclusion that people are very complex and that identities are multiple, coexistent and changing over time. She introduces the idea of identity as consisting of multiple subjectivities. "By subjectivity I mean the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on" (2006: 107). Subjectivity is also shaped by history. Ortner identifies themes of complexity, associated with both anxiety and reflexivity. What if the individual actors in some ways fail to "carry it off"?

For Ortner, identity is a matter of multiple factors. Many writers have addressed the subject of ethnic or gender identity; Ortner adds class as an important aspect of the identity mix. She is particularly concerned with the fact that class, a culturally and historically defined identity, is typically hidden in many works and is "not a central category of cultural discourse" (2006: 24). This tendency among American social scientists is rooted in history: "the United States has glorified opportunity and mobility, and has portrayed itself as more open to individual achievement than it really is" (Ortner 2006: 25).

Identities may be personal in nature, but they are shared with others. In addition to identities related to gender, ethnicity, or class, individuals may have a community identity that has attached to it notions about the community, its character, and how people fit in. This community identity may be place-based or may transcend geographic barriers, as with translocal or transnational networks.

In his exploration of community identity, David M. Hummon has explored common values or assumptions found in urban areas, suburbs and small towns in Northern California. Hummon draws upon the work of Clifford Geertz in attempting to define ways of thinking that are common to each community, calling these ways "ideologies." "Geertz proposes that ideology is a distinct cultural form that serves specific symbolic as well as social and psychological functions…a symbolic rendering of the world" (Hummon 1990: 37). Using ethnographic techniques, Hummon identifies some beliefs common to small towns that are relevant to the exploration of San Diego County's eastern rural areas. Among the values he identifies and contrasts with urban perspectives are simplicity, community-oriented values and traditional values. Small town dwellers call upon these values to "identify their way of life with the good life by incorporating contrasting conceptions of what communities *ought*

to be into their language and perspectives" (Hummon 1990: 169). Why people prefer a certain type of community identity is a combination of factors. Hummon notes that they may adopt local values in order to conform and avoid frustration, they may move to the type of community whose values they prefer, or they may be socialized or enculturated to believe a certain kind of community is preferable. Migration to a specific place in search of a certain set of values is common in many locales. Pérez describes the periurban community of Atzompa in Mexico and the apparent influx of urbanites who "desire…to relocate to a place that can offer them a more community-based atmosphere" (Pérez 2003: 353). In fact, she hypothesizes that this immigration by choice may serve to reinforce the sense of community, as these ex-urbanites seek to maintain the less frantic, non-urban lifestyle they have sought through moving to Atzompa.

Gavin Smith is interested in a concept that overarches and incorporates community identity. In his essay "Out of Site: The Horizons of Collective Identity" (2002) and his book *Confronting the Present* (1999), he discusses collective identity. Shared experiences of place and work give rise to collective identity as do other factors such as gender, ethnicity and religion. Although aspects and experiences of place generate community identity and aspects and experiences of work give rise to class identity, Smith believes the two are irrevocably intertwined and that an examination of collective identity must take both place and economics into consideration. Furthermore, political engagement is key in understanding collective identity; "cultural collectivities arise out of political engagement" (Smith 1999: 205). Therefore, beyond shared daily experience is shared resistance, a process that requires the negotiation of meanings. In his description of the resistance of the Huasicanchino peasants of Peru against their landlord, he notes both the heterogeneity of the peasants and the negotiations over key words related to important relationships. The collective identity formed is not based on identical past experience or motives, and phrases and words do not have the same meaning for all; they are contested. New meanings are formed from the outcomes of these contestations; new history is written. Formations of collective identity and collective action shape culture.

THE NOTION OF DISCOURSE/NARRATIVE

Many of the writers already mentioned have associated both place and identity with themes of power and resistance. Along with the themes of power and resistance are narratives, or discourses about power, about resistance, and about place and identity. It should be made clear that this kind of "discourse" is what Gee (2005) calls "Discourse with a capital "D". Gee defines this Discourse as, "…socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the 'right' places and at the 'right' times with the 'right' objects (associations that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network')" (2005: 17). This Discourse is closely associated with the term "narrative". Both can be used to answer questions such as, "Who am I? Who are we? What do I/we believe? How shall I/we align myself/ourselves politically?" And clearly, these are questions closely interwoven with issues of identity and power. As Cornell (2000) says, "identity narratives and their production are bound up in power relations…*who gets to narrate whom* and …*whose version of identity narrative gains currency where*" as well as "*what an identity narrative claims*" (47-38). Construction of a narrative may also involve issues of place or place of origin. For Rodman (2003 [1992]), discussion over contested places and spaces involves issues of narrative. "The socially contested, dynamic construction of places represents the temporary grounding of ideas. These are often overlapping narratives of place…They can be competing narratives" (218).

Narratives and Discourses are therefore created for various purposes and are not only a site of power struggle, but also used to assert certain positions in society. But it would be inappropriate to think that once a narrative is created it remains static. Smith discusses how "heightened political struggle intensifies discourse within [the group]…history itself is reconstituted," (1999: 56). Therefore, like identity, discourse is multi-faceted and constantly changing.

Gee has another term for the theories people develop in order to explain certain aspects of their worlds and how they pertain to particular words. He refers to them as "cultural models" (although he makes it clear he would prefer the term "Discourse models" were it not for common usage of the first term). For Gee, cultural models reflect a norm, the expected reaction or understanding when a particular word is used. It is important to understand that these norms may vary by gender, class and position in society, as well as the

locality. Gee uses the example of what "success" means to U.S. Americans in different socioeconomic groups. The cultural model involved states that "with effort you can get ahead." While white-collar workers may find they are measuring up to the concept of success in U. S. culture, in practice, blue-collar workers have replaced this model with that of "breadwinner." Success as head of a family takes precedence over individual "success," and the word has a different meaning for blue-collar workers. Gee also recognizes that cultural models may be inconsistent and incomplete.

These cultural models are really narratives. Gee is speaking from the standpoint of a discourse analyst, trying to explain how words and cultural assumptions and standards are reflected or adapted in daily speaking. He does not spend much time on how resistance plays into Discourses and cultural models, or on change over time in discourses. He does however acknowledge how power issues can impact interpretations of cultural models and how norms are established. His basic point is that words and how they are used and interpreted are useful tools in understanding issues of identity as well as values and expectations.

CONCLUSION

The three areas of place, identity and narrative clearly overlap and intersect in various ways. For many writers, place and identity are intertwined. Places such as parks have contested narratives as well as symbolic importance in American identity. How these three theoretical areas relate to eastern San Diego County and the Sunrise Powerlink is addressed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

I chose three methodologies to utilize in examining the research questions. The first is the traditional interview approach. For this portion of the study, my goal was to interview twenty to twenty-five residents of eastern San Diego County along the proposed preferred route of the Sunrise Powerlink. This geographic area encompasses Ramona, Santa Ysabel, Julian, Warner Springs, Ranchita and Borrego Springs, or generally those communities in northeastern San Diego County along routes 78, 79 and S22. Although the Sunrise Powerlink primary proposed route was modified early in the process to avoid the town of Julian, there was heavy involvement in the Sunrise Powerlink protest among residents in this town.

The interview questions, apart from those designed to obtain basic data regarding place of residence, amount of time living in the general area, educational level and occupation, were designed to answer the research questions. One danger in pursuing this kind of inquiry is that those who are willing to be interviewed may be viewed as "elite" in one sense or another. The questions regarding educational level and occupation were included to assess the degree to which interviewees were better educated or engaged in higher-paying occupations than one might normally expect.

Several questions were designed to obtain information regarding how the interviewees referred to the area where they lived, why they had moved to the area, what aspects of living there were important to them, and what they might tell a newcomer about the area. I hoped that responses would reveal whether residents even used the term backcountry, how they looked at their area and their presence there, and any community identity/identities they might hold. Following these questions, specific questions regarding backcountry identity or identities and a broad definition of the backcountry were posed ("How do you define the backcountry? Are there people living in this area that you don't think are backcountry people? Are there special things that backcountry people do or say, or attitudes that "make" them backcountry people?"). These questions were asked even if the

respondent had not used the term "backcountry". The next question, "Do you think there are differences, whether minor or major, between backcountry residents and city residents? What are those differences and why do you think they exist?" were designed to obtain information regarding perceptions of backcountry residents about their way of life and the urban way of life as well as any underlying preferences and values that might underpin each way of living.

The next set of questions pertained specifically to the Sunrise Powerlink proposal and were designed to discover how or if they perceived the Sunrise Powerlink threatened the way of life, the identity or identities of the interviewees, the perceived role of urban residents in the debate, and whether opposition to the Sunrise Powerlink had unified the backcountry in some respect. The questions also were intended to elicit the interviewee's narrative of the story of the Sunrise Powerlink. The last questions concerned other threats to the backcountry and the interviewee's personal views on whether the backcountry would or would not survive the threats. I sometimes but not always asked "Do you think the backcountry will survive these threats *with its character intact*?" These questions again were designed to gain more insight into how and what might be perceived as threatening to the backcountry identity or identities and to gain more information on perceptions about how that identity might change in the future. The majority of interviewees were not surprised or shocked by this question; nearly all had spent at least some time thinking about the consequences of the Powerlink.

Interviewees were contacted through a variety of sources. Three primary sources of contacts were very helpful to me. The first was an activist member of the grassroots organization, PeoplesPowerlink, the second was a business owner in Borrego Springs and the third was a personal friend. Each of these individuals gave me several names to contact for possible interest in an interview. Those who were interviewed were asked for more contacts at the end of the interview. Interest in discussing the subject was generally high, particularly in the desert area and the high country, but slightly less in Ramona. One interviewee in Borrego Springs volunteered to be interviewed when I mentioned my research topic during a casual conversation. The personal reference method of obtaining potential contact information is known as "snowball sampling" (Bernard 2000: 179)

Eventually interviews were completed with twenty-one participants. Interviews took place between July 13, 2008 and October 25, 2008. Informed consent documents were

discussed with all interviewees and signed by them, with a copy given to each. I explained my own position on the Powerlink proposal, and often described the solar panels I installed on my home.

I was conscious of the fact that using snowball sampling could lead to an overly uniform group of responses. Therefore I told each interviewee who was asked for contacts that I was interested in a breadth of opinion regarding both the Powerlink and the subject of living in the backcountry. The final group of interviewees covered not only eight activists but also some locals who were interested in the Sunrise Powerlink issue, but not necessarily heavily involved. I also attempted to interview a fairly diverse geographical group, with eight interviewees residing in the Julian/San Felipe/Warner Springs/Ranchita area, eight in Borrego Springs and five in Ramona. However, the interviewees cannot be said to be a representative sample of the area residents. Several interviewees belonged to the same church, several were involved in Sunrise Powerlink activist groups and quite a few were involved in land use groups or advocacy. Additionally, I was unable to locate any supporters of the primary proposed route of the Powerlink; interviewees in the Julian to Borrego Springs area indicated that they knew of no supporters. One interviewee in Ramona believed there were supporters in the town but felt that they were very low profile due to concern about the likelihood of negative community responses to their support. Research findings may be broadly applicable to several groups in eastern San Diego County; however, due to the composition of the final interviewee set, the findings can only be applied with any certainty to opponents of the Powerlink.

Although I did not ask any questions regarding age, the interviewees appeared to range from the late 30's to the 70's. Four interviewees had been adversely impacted by large fires in the last few years. Two had lost their homes entirely and two more had experienced damage to their houses and personal property. Although no questions were asked about political affiliations, quite a few interviewees volunteered their political stance. Many could be called "liberals" but there were also a few conservatives and at least one quasi-Libertarian. More than half of the group can see the first proposed route of the Sunrise Powerlink from their homes and all will see it during the course of daily business. There was a wide range of educational levels and occupations as can be seen in Appendix A.

Interviews took place in a variety of venues, including interviewee homes and porches (11), places of business (5), the Julian Library (2) and restaurants and other public places (3). Interviews were recorded using a small digital recording device and were later transcribed and distributed to the interviewees if desired for comments and/or corrections.

A second, subsidiary methodology involved examination of values as revealed by word usage during the interviews. A cognitive mapping software program, Catpac, was used to analyze the content of the interviews after transcription. Catpac was created by Terra Research and Computing in Ithaca, New York. According to the Catpac Users Manual (The Galileo Company 2005: 11), "Catpac is a self-organizing artificial neural network that has been optimized for reading text. Catpac is able to identify the most important words in a text and determine patterns of similarity based on the way they're used in text." Catpac reveals not only the frequency of important words in a text but also the relative correlation between the words in the minds of users. The program is extremely user-friendly and can be modified to include words that appear important to the researcher and eliminate others that are used frequently but are not significant.

In order to use Catpac, I eliminated my own questions and various side conversations from the interview transcriptions. I then merged the interview texts together to create one text document for analysis. I also created three files, one incorporating text from interviews in Borrego Springs, one with texts related to Ramona, and one with texts related to other regions ("High Country"). Each file was subjected to Catpac analysis. The data were modified after examination to exclude certain phrases such as "you know" and "I mean", where those were used to emphasize or as filler words in conversational English. Other words that occurred frequently were also examined to ensure that they were significant and not merely commonly used by the interviewees in place of a variety of other terms or as filler words. For example, the word "kind" was frequently used, but often it was used as part of the phrase "kind of", denoting vague similarity or as a synonym for "type". A number of variations, some of which forced inclusions of additional words such as threat, pristine, protect, etc., were analyzed as well.

Catpac not only reveals word counts in text documents, it also creates a dendogram that reveals the closeness of association of the most frequently used words (plus those the researcher has chosen to include and minus those that occur frequently but appear to have no

significance). Using a subsidiary program, Oresme, the clustering of words can be examined, and using another subsidiary program, ThoughtView, perceptual maps indicating the relative associations in interviewees' minds can be depicted visually.

A third approach involved examining online websites and newspaper articles to evaluate the narratives that were presented for public consumption. These documents were not analyzed using Catpac, but were evaluated in a more qualitative fashion.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY OF THE
NORTHERN BACKCOUNTRY OF SAN DIEGO
COUNTY – A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The original proposed route of the Sunrise Powerlink passed close to the towns of Borrego Springs, Ranchita, Julian, Santa Ysabel and Ramona – all located in northeastern San Diego County - before entering the city of San Diego in Rancho Penasquitos. The history of these towns is diverse, and the topography and climate vary significantly among the different areas. The following is a brief discussion of this region, divided into the desert area (Borrego Springs and vicinity), the "High Country" (Julian, Ranchita, San Felipe, Warner Springs) and Ramona (including Santa Ysabel).

THE DESERT AREA – BORREGO SPRINGS

Borrego Springs is the furthest east of the communities discussed here. This town, situated in the middle of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park at the western end of the Sonoran Desert, has a dry and inhospitable climate. The community averages less than four inches of rain each year. Daytime temperatures average 105 to 110 degrees in the summer and freezing temperatures often occur in the winter months (Pryde 1992: 34). In spite of the difficult climate, there is a great diversity of unusual and sometimes rare vegetation in the desert area, and at least two different natural sub-communities: the desert riparian and the palm oasis. The desert also serves as home to a variety of animals, including the lovely and endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep.

The Anza Borrego Desert State Park, an enormous tract of land, is owned by the State of California and operated by the State Parks Commission as a recreational and educational facility. The Park, covering about 600,000 acres, is the largest state park in California. Nearly one million visitors come to the area each year to enjoy the wildflowers, the camping grounds and other Park amenities (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Entrance to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park at the top of the Montezuma Grade.

The Borrego Springs area was the winter home for Native Americans 9,000 years ago. Over the years a number of native groups established sites in the valley; some of the remains can be seen today (Lindsay 2001: 21). A great variety of relatively modern (200 to 300 year old) pictographs exist in this area, mostly south of Route 79. No tribal groups currently reside in the valley. In fact, disease had led to the extermination of most of the local Native Americans by the time the first European crossed the Anza-Borrego Desert.

In 1772 Lieutenant Pedro Fages from the San Diego Presidio crossed the valley while chasing deserters (Lindsay 2001: 22). Two years later, Juan Bautista de Anza made an attempt to find an overland route from Mexico to Alta California, passing through the valley en route (Lindsay 2001: 36-37). The success of this trip led to the 1775-1776 Anza Expedition, an attempt by 240 people accompanied by 1,000 head of livestock to settle Alta California. This expedition established the Anza Trail (Lindsay 2001: 39). Later, the Mexicans created the Sonora Road, parallel to the Anza Trail but turning inland to Vallecito, the San Felipe Valley and what would become Warner's Ranch on the way to Los Angeles.

Like the Spanish settlers and the Mexicans, early Americans dashed through the valley as quickly as possible, making no attempt to settle the desert lands. Stephen Watts Kearney and the Army of the West came through the valley in 1846, seeking to engage the

enemy in the Mexican American War. The Mormon Battalion came through in the same year to establish an east-to-west wagon route (Lindsay 2001: 23).

During the years that followed, the valley was on the path of numerous stage and mail routes. The years 1857 – 1861 saw the establishment of the San Antonio & San Diego Mail Line (familiarly known as the Jackass Mail) and the Butterfield Overland Mail (Lindsay 2001: 292-293). Not until 1872 did cattlemen come to the area. Most of these were Civil War veterans and stage drivers looking for winter grazing. Cattle grazing continued in the area and was allowed in the state park under grazing concessions until 1972 (Lindsay 2001: 24). From 1912 though the 1920's, a few homesteaders tried their luck in the Borrego Valley, but only a few crops were successful in the arid climate. Date palms, introduced in 1927, did well, as did alfalfa and grapes (Brigandi 1997: 33-34).

The town of Borrego Springs and the surrounding park were never the site of a gold rush or major mining operation, although gypsum, calcite and dolomite were all found in the area. The only rumor of gold was circulated by a miner named Thomas Long Smith, nicknamed Pegleg Smith (Lindsay 2001: 25). Each year in April the town of Borrego Springs enjoys the Pegleg Smith Liar's Contest, an outrageous storyteller competition sponsored by the Park. Stories told at this event should concern either Pegleg Smith or gold (Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce 2008: Calendar). In spite of the tall tale nature of the gold rumors, prospecting activities still take place in the Borrego Springs area.

During the 1920's developers saw a potential gold mine of a different sort in the Borrego Valley. From 1926 to 1930, development activities were brisk in the area, as speculators sought to create another Palm Springs. Building slowed when the Depression struck, although Dana Burks, a Los Angeles and Palm Springs real estate developer, invested heavily in the area in the 1930's. He foresaw a winter playground that would include recreational living and agriculture (Brigandi 1997: 47). Building picked up again after World War II. In 1946 A. A. Burnand, a vegetable grower from the Imperial Valley and Mexico, bought the majority of the private land in the valley. In 1947 he and his partners founded the Borrego Springs Land & Development Company and developed plans for a resort community. His family continues to be prominent in the area and has donated substantial tracts of land to the Park (Lindsay 2001: 91 – 92). Electric service reached the valley in 1945 and telephone service in 1946 (Brigandi 1997: 49).

In 1928, Frederick Law Olmsted recommended to the State of California that Palm Canyon, at the west end of the Borrego Valley, be included in the new state park system. Although the remainder of the state park system was established in late 1928, the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park was not created until 1932 (Brigandi 1997: 26-27). Lindsay (1973: 17) cites "[s]peculative investment, confused land titles, multiple ownership of land, problems in surveying the region, indecision on the part of the park commission, lack of funds and finally unexpected opposition" as contributors to the four-year delay. A variety of organizations, not all of which were coordinating their activities with the newly formed park commission, were acquiring land and funding for the park. In large part, a private group in Borrego Springs facilitated the formation of the Park. Public funding was difficult to obtain. In fact, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors actively opposed the formation of the park, in the belief that it would reduce taxable land in San Diego County, that inappropriate land was being set aside, and that there might be a plot to build a high-speed highway to Los Angeles through the area (Lindsay 1973: 21). Eventually both the State Park Commission and the U.S. Department of the Interior were called in to settle some of the claims and counterclaims, and the Park was dedicated in 1941 (Lindsay 1973: 24). Over time the park has grown as more private and public lands have been annexed. It appears now that all the effort was well worth it. As Diana Lindsay says in *Anza-Borrego A to Z: People, Places, and Things:*

> Visionaries who created the park were more than justified when later scientific discoveries confirmed the world-class resources found within the park. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park contains an unbroken Pliocene-Pleistocene fossil record. It is a home for rare and endangered plants and animals and has been designated a United Nations Biosphere Reserve and a National Natural Landmark. It is estimated that the park holds more than 10,000 archaeological sites, only 1,500 of which have been recorded. (2001: 26-27)

The Community Plan for Borrego Springs, a document prepared for the San Diego County General Plan update, says that the population of Borrego Springs today is approximately 2,700 year-round with an additional 2,000-plus seasonal residents. Tourism is the major economic activity in the town. The Park is a major factor in attracting people to the area, although there are also several golf courses and small resorts (Borrego Springs Community Planning Group 2008: 5-7).

Agriculture today is limited to citrus and ornamental plants, including palms. A major challenge facing the area is the ongoing depletion of the aquifer that has sustained life in Borrego Springs for many years. This depletion, or overdrafting, has resulted in tension between growers and other residents, since agriculture consumes about 70% to 75% of the water used each year in Borrego Springs.

THE HIGH COUNTRY – JULIAN AREA

The "High Country" is defined in this study as the areas east of and higher in elevation than Ramona and west of and higher in elevation than Borrego Springs. This area includes not only the town of Julian, but also San Felipe and Ranchita. The largest and probably most well known of the northern backcountry towns is Julian, located southwest of Borrego Springs, just a few miles west of the Park boundary. Although the original proposed route of the Sunrise Powerlink bypassed the town of Julian, many town residents have become involved in opposition and several were interviewed for this study.

Julian has a much more moderate climate than Borrego Springs. At an elevation of 3,655 – 4,100 feet above sea level, it has average summer highs of 88.4 degrees and January lows of 32.5 degrees. Precipitation is also much higher than in most parts of the county at 27.5" per year (1971 – 2000 average) (Pryde 2004: 36).

Before the intrusion of European settlers, Julian was home to a large number of Native American settlements, particularly in the Cuyamaca area. Like the natives of the Borrego Valley, however, these communities had fallen on hard times by the mid-1800's, as diseases and assimilation took their toll. Only one reservation remains in the Julian area today (LeMenager 1992: 36).

Although various settlers and explorers of European descent had passed through the Julian area on their way to other spots, the first large population movement into the area came with the discovery of gold in late 1869. Gold had been discovered at various places in San Diego County, particularly in the Escondido area, but the find in Julian appeared to be large and easily mined. In late 1869, Drury Bailey and cousins Mike and Webb Julian – all former Confederate soldiers from Georgia - arrived in the area. The three became town leaders; Mike Julian later became San Diego County Assessor as well as the town's founder in name (LeMenager 1992: 42-43).

Almost immediately after the first gold strike, disputes over land, title and mining rights broke out. Eventually the U.S. Department of the Interior settled these issues (LeMenager 1992: 62) and over a period of years a good bit of gold came out of the hills. In 1934 the California Division of Mines estimated that in 63 years of mining about $4 to $5 million worth of gold had come from Julian area mines, the great bulk from the Stonewall Mine (LeMenager 1992: 83). During the initial years of the rush the town flourished; records indicate that there were eight saloons in town in 1870 (LeMenager 1992: 137). Julian was an ethnic melting pot, although the Chinese and Native Americans fared substantially worse than African Americans and whites (Jordan 2008: 104-105). However, the rush did not last very long, and by 1876, the furor had died down. The larger mines continued to produce only at a low level.

During the years of the rush, however, Julian was an active place. The Army and the Jackass Mail both stopped there, as did the Pony Express and various stage services. Toll roads and other routes were built to accommodate the flow of traffic to Julian from the west. Julian developed ties with other towns in the region as stagecoaches moved from Ramona to Julian to Warner Springs (LeMenager 1992: 92-97, 102-103). Julian was considered an important town in the region, although various historians have disputed rumors that it was once considered for the county seat (LeMenager 1992: 109). The railroad never ran to Julian, despite the town's efforts to obtain a rail link.

After the rush the town survived, unlike some other mining towns. Jordan (2008: 102) postulates that this was due to the large number of women and families, not just single miners, who came to the area. In 1887 the first edition of the Julian Sentinel was published and in 1889 Cuyamaca Lake was created to provide water to the City of San Diego (LeMenager 1992: 124,155). Also in 1889, Julian apples drew attention at the San Diego County Fair as well as at national events (LeMenager 1992: 166). In 1949 the town began to select a single day in October and advertise it as "Apple Day" (LeMenager 1992: 173). Today "Apple Days" and "Harvest Days" take up all of October and part of November and apple pies are a main attraction in Julian.

One aspect of life in the High Country that cannot be ignored is the threat of fire. In 1950 the Cuyamaca fire ravaged nearly 64,000 acres near Julian and in 1970 the Laguna fire also destroyed large acreage (LeMenager 1992: 210-212). The largest and most destructive

fire in the area was the 2003 Cedar Fire, which began southwest of Julian. This fire eventually threatened the town itself; however it burned around the town through Santa Ysabel and to the north. Most of the forests south of Julian and many dwellings and businesses located on the southwest side of town were destroyed (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2004: Cedar Fire Incident Information; San Diego Fire-Rescue Department 2004: 6).

Julian today is a small community with just 1,621 residents at the time of the 2000 census. Tourism represents the major source of local income. Town history and gold rush history are important aspects of the tourism presentation (see Figure 4). In addition, there are other local businesses and governmental employment opportunities in the area.

Figure 4. Shops on Main Street in Julian, 2009.

RAMONA

Ramona – the backcountry area closest to urban San Diego - stands at the foothills of the Peninsular Range, slightly closer to the town of Julian than to the coast. Average elevation is around 1,450 feet above sea level (Pryde 1992: 36). Average annual rainfall in Ramona is 17.1", and temperatures range from an average January low of 36.5 degrees to an

average summer high of 91.4 degrees (Pryde 2004: 36).   Ramona is usually above the fog, avoiding the "marine layer" that sometimes blankets the coastal areas. The town's sunny weather has provided the basis for a variety of town slogans and developer marketing materials. The latest slogan, "Valley of the Sun," has been used for several years (Tarr 1997: 10-11). Although it abuts the dense suburbs of Escondido and Poway, Ramona is relatively cut off from the western portion of the county. Access is by two-lane roads only, making it difficult to reach from the more urban areas of the county (Tarr 1997: 9).

The history of Native Americans in the Ramona area is similar to that in other parts of San Diego County. LeMenager (1989: 15) says, "Today, signs of early Indian occupation can be found wherever there was once a reliable spring and oak trees from which acorns could be gathered." Many of the original residents had died or been driven out of the area before white settlers began to arrive. However, more Native Americans remained in the Ramona area (including Santa Ysabel and Warner Springs) than in Julian or the Borrego Springs area.

The first white settlers in the area were Jose Joaquin Ortega, owner of Rancho Santa Ysabel and Edward Stokes, owner of Rancho Santa Maria. These land grants were made in 1843 and 1844 respectively (O'Neal 1975: 11). In 1851 the U. S. Congress passed the Gwin Act, establishing a land commission and calling for proof of claims on land and verification via survey. Land sales were difficult during this period since ownership boundaries were unclear (LeMenager 1989: 40). Eventually it was determined that some land between the two ranchos was available for claims and homesteading, leading a few new ranchers to move to the area in the 1850's (LeMenager 1989: 46-47).

In 1846, Stephen Watts Kearney and the Army of the West passed through both Santa Ysabel and Santa Maria on the way to the Battle of San Pasqual west of present-day Ramona (O'Neal 1975: 12-14). The last "Indian uprising" in the area took place in 1851 at Warner's Ranch, and in 1852 a treaty was signed at Santa Ysabel (O'Neal 1975: 18).

Ramona began to expand at the time of the Julian gold rush. The town at that time had neither the name nor the location of today's town center. In 1871 the store and post office were situated in an area called Ballena, east of present-day Ramona and close to today's Golden Eagle Ranch. The area residents produced barley, cattle, rye and hay, providing a source of supply for the Julian miners (LeMenager 1989: 58-59). In those days

there was much coming and going between Old Town San Diego and Julian, with stage lines passing up the Mussey Grade Road (Figure 5) or Eagle Peak Road (LeMenager 1989: 65-70).

Figure 5. Along the Mussey Grade Road, 2009.

In 1870, much of present-day Ramona was set aside as the San Pasqual Indian Reservation, but this set-aside was revoked in 1871. In 1875, the reservation system was institutionalized, but the San Pasqual reservation was not re-vitalized. Several reservations were established in the area, however, including Santa Ysabel and Mesa Grande (Carrico 2008: 65-69, 85).

In 1872, Juan Arrambide purchased a large portion of Rancho Santa Maria and in 1878 and 1879 he sold this holding to Bernard Etcheverry (the first purchase of one-half of the land cost Etcheverry only one dollar, the second half cost him $12,250) (LeMenager 1989: 85-86). As gold fever died down in Julian, the focus of activity began to move further west toward Rancho Santa Maria. A store and post office were built in the area occupied by

present-day Ramona, then known as Nuevo (LeMenager 1989: 87). Agriculture was the mainstay of the area.

In 1886, subdivision and development began. Milton Santee bought Etcheverry's land and began to market the area, calling it "Ramona" after Helen Hunt Jackson's romantic novel (LeMenager 1989: 91, 93-94). In 1880 there were fewer than a dozen white families in town but by 1900 there were over 115 households (LeMenager 1989: 96). In 1887, the Ramona Hotel opened (O'Neal 1975: 26) and The Sentinel Newspaper (name changed to the Ramona Sentinel in 1901) was founded (LeMenager 1989: 139).

During the early and mid twentieth century, town infrastructure developed. A local justice court was formed in 1890 and continued to operate until 1976 when state law changed and the court was moved (LeMenager 1989: 151). Constables were appointed locally until 1934 when the county sheriff's department assumed responsibility for law enforcement (LeMenager 1989: 155-158). In 1924, the first fire department was formed (LeMenager 1989: 193-194). Water departments have been formed and dissolved several times since 1925 (LeMenager 1989: 176-179). While the town took form and grew, agriculture continued to rule: Ramona was known as the Turkey Capital of the World from the 1930's through the 1950's, when turkey agricultural technology advances, which allowed other regions to produce the same pattern of egg-laying and maturation as occurred naturally in Ramona, and the high cost of grain led to the decline of the industry (LeMenager 1989: 207-211). In the 1950's, egg farming took over (Tarr 1997: 29).

Ramona changed significantly in the 1970's. For some time real estate developers had been eager to obtain land and lure middle class city residents to Ramona. In 1969, Raymond A. Watt purchased land about five miles southeast of central Ramona, and by late 1972 the development of the San Diego Country Estates was in full swing. Houses in this area were larger and more expensive than most homes in Ramona; the private development included a golf course and equestrian center, and most of the single-family homes were custom-built (Tarr 1997: 32-25). Disparities between residents of the Estates and "old" Ramona with respect to income and education as well as housing values caused friction and continue to do so today. Additionally, some residents feel that this kind of development is out of character, and that Ramona should remain a rural and historical community, rather than a suburb of the City of San Diego or a flashy weekend getaway. Many of these

residents have maintained a low-growth/no-growth stance, and oppose widening access roads into Ramona. The tension between low-growth/no-growth proponents and development supporters has been evident in both the Planning Group (formed by the County Board of Supervisors) and the Water District (Tarr 1997: 87-105).

Ramona has grown very quickly in the last forty years. According to U.S. Census data cited by Tarr (1997: 32), there were 1,966 housing units in Ramona in 1970. By 1980 there were 5,571. Population has boomed from an estimated 27,700 in 1990 to 33,407 in 2000 according to the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use (Pryde and Stutz 2004: 239). Although eggs and horses remain important sources of income in the area, an increasing number of residents commute to San Diego (Pryde and Stutz 2004: 240), making it more of a bedroom community that is dependent on the urban center rather than the autonomous community of the past (Figure 6 reflects some present-day developments).

Figure 6. The Ramona Big K, 2009.

CHAPTER 5

THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE
SUNRISE POWERLINK PROJECT

Many regard Southern California as an extremely desirable place to live and work. The climate is temperate; mountain, desert and ocean living environments are available; and historically unemployment is lower than elsewhere in the state. But those who think in terms of sustainability and ecological footprints see a bleaker future for the area. Southern California, and particularly San Diego County, lacks many basic resources readily available in other areas. Additionally, the infrastructure of the San Diego/Orange County area has not grown commensurately with increases in population.

The scarcest natural resource in this area is water; however, electric power presents another cause for concern. Over Labor Day weekend 2007, the local power company, San Diego Gas & Electric, issued several warnings regarding possible rolling blackouts of electric power. With total on-line generating resources of 4,900 megawatts (MW) and noon usage of 4,600 MW, trouble seemed imminent. Although the California Independent System Operator (the state power grid overseer) later concluded that these warnings were inappropriate, many customers lost electricity during the abnormally hot period (Rose 2007).

One way to mitigate this problem, according to SDG&E, is construction of the 150-mile Sunrise Powerlink transmission line. Before discussing the power line project itself, it is helpful to review some background on SDG&E and how it is regulated by the State of California and the U.S. Government.

SDG&E

SDG&E supplies power not only to San Diego County but also to portions of Orange County. According to its application for the Sunrise Powerlink project, SDG&E services approximately 1.3 million customers today (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b: I-6). The current SDG&E website and the annual 10-K report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission claim that the utility serves 1.4 million electric meters and 3.4 million customers. SDG&E is wholly owned by Sempra Energy, a utility holding company with

annual revenues of around $12 billion and substantial energy-related international business, including power generation as well as distribution and transmission. SDG&E contributed slightly less than 25% of Sempra's total revenue in 2007 and about 26% of its total income (Shareholder.com 2007). Sempra has been listed in "The Business Week 50" 2007 list of the top performing U.S. companies and as number 4 on the Fortune magazine 2007 "Most Admired Companies" list for electric and gas utilities (Sempra Energy 2007).

SDG&E is classified as an investor-owned utility (IOU). There are only three IOU's in California. IOU's are subject to regulation of consumer prices and how their product (energy) is distributed statewide. The position of SDG&E and the other IOU's is an interesting one. They are expected to produce profits for stockholders (the parent company) while at the same time the prices they charge, their supply sources, and the prices they pay for energy are regulated. SDG&E is in some ways a public servant with a private profit motive. The regulatory system that governs SDG&E is complex and the markets in which it participates have experienced some interesting twists and turns in recent years.

THE REGULATORY SYSTEM

The regulation of power generation involves numerous state and federal agencies. State legislation governs construction of power plants, electric distribution, retail sales of power and other aspects of the utility business. For example, in 1996 the California legislature enacted AB1890, providing for broad restructuring of the electric industry in California. More recently, the state legislature enacted SB1078, which requires investor-owned utilities to procure 20% of their electrical retail sales from "eligible renewable resources" by 2017. At the federal level, legislation governs electric transmission and the sale of power at wholesale.

Regulatory agencies at the state and federal level implement the legislation. Rules and decisions issued by these agencies govern most aspects of utility operations.

State Agencies: The California Public Utility Commission

The primary state agency involved in decisions concerning rates paid by consumers and the construction of power plants and power lines is the state Public Utility Commission. The California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) consists of a board of five commissioners

appointed by the Governor and approved by the state Senate (California Public Utilities Commission 2007a). The Commission holds frequent public meetings, and many of its hearings are open to formal public comment. The CPUC states its mission as follows:

> The California Public Utilities Commission serves the public interest by protecting consumers and ensuring the provision of safe, reliable utility service and infrastructure at reasonable rates, with a commitment to environmental enhancement and a healthy California economy. We regulate utility services, stimulate innovation, and promote competitive markets, where possible, in the communications, energy, transportation, and water industries. (California Public Utilities Commission 2007a: Mission)

The CPUC includes not only the commissioners but also a ratepayer advocacy group, the Division of Ratepayer Advocacy (DRA). This division of the CPUC

> …participates in Commission proceedings, workshops, and other forums with significant dollar impacts on consumers that address issues of consumer protection, development of fair rules for competition or other significant policy issues, and that address service quality, rate levels, and rate of return. DRA's mission, as defined by Senate Bill 960 in 1996 and embodied in Public Utilities Code Section 309.5, is to 'obtain the lowest possible rate for service consistent with reliable and safe service levels.' (California Public Utilities Commission 2007a: Divisions)

State Agencies: The CEC

The CPUC is not the only agency in California with its finger in the energy pie. The California Energy Commission (CEC) is the planning and policy arm of the California legislative branch. The CEC characterizes itself as follows:

> The California Energy Commission is the state's primary energy policy and planning agency. Created by the Legislature in 1974 and located in Sacramento, the Commission has five major responsibilities:
> - Forecasting future energy needs and keeping historical energy data
> - Licensing thermal power plants 50 megawatts or larger
> - Promoting energy efficiency through appliance and building standards
> - Developing energy technologies and supporting renewable energy
> - Planning for and directing state response to energy emergency
>
> With the signing of the Electric Industry Deregulation Law in 1998 (Assembly Bill 1890), the Commission's role includes overseeing funding programs that support public interest energy research; advance energy science and technology through research, development and demonstration; and provide market support to existing, new and emerging renewable technologies. (California Energy Commission 2007a)

State Agencies: The Independent System Operator

A third agency involved at the state-wide level in regulating the electrical power industry is the California Independent System Operator (CAISO). CAISO is an independent, non-profit public benefit corporation and is the "authority" on system supply and demand statewide. CAISO defines itself as follows:

> The California ISO is a not-for-profit public benefit corporation brought on line in 1998 when the state restructured its electricity industry. It is the impartial link between power plants and the utilities that provide electricity to customers. Although utilities still own transmission lines, the California ISO ensures equal access to power lines formerly under private control.

CAISO is the agency tasked with balancing buying and selling of power between providers and transmitters within the state and across state lines (from neighboring states such as Arizona, for example). CAISO is also authorized to levy charges (congestion fees) on utilities that are unable to meet electricity demand in within their service area. CAISO reports directly to the Federal Government rather than to a state agency (California Independent System Operator 2007).

Summary: The Interrelationship of State Agencies

To summarize the state infrastructure surrounding the generation and distribution of electrical power, the CPUC actually approves the construction of power plants and transmission lines as well as establishing retail rates for electricity. The CEC establishes broad policy and encourages or discourages various plans of action by local and state authorities. The CAISO controls the transmission of power in the state and the sources and prices of electrical power to the distributors. On occasion the three entities work together, as they have in establishing the RETI (Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative), a joint effort to identify and facilitate the usage of renewable energy statewide (California Energy Commission 2007b).

Only the CPUC holds state authority to approve construction of new power lines. The CEC and CAISO can and do voice support or lack thereof for specific projects.

Federal Agencies: The Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

The governance of utilities rests primarily with the state Power Utility Commissions and other state agencies. However, the Federal government plays a significant role in aspects of energy regulation that affect interstate commerce. For example, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved the restructuring of California electricity markets in the 1990's and addressed the 2000-2001 electricity crisis in California, providing a forum for market manipulation claims and ENRON pricing issues. Pursuant to federal legislation enacted in 2005, the FERC designated two "National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors" in October 2007 – one of which includes San Diego County. This action brings Federal pressure to bear on various agencies to work to relieve electrical congestion in the area of interest (Department of Energy 2007a).

One may wonder why there are so many agencies charged with policing the energy area. One set of incidents in California's energy history reveals why careless or poorly thought out actions in this area can have a devastating effect on the industry as a whole. The California Energy Crisis of 2000/2001 left the industry in a state of uncertainty and greatly decreased public trust in the utility markets in general.

THE 2000/2001 CALIFORNIA ELECTRICAL ENERGY CRISIS

California's recent energy history is a rocky one. In 1996, California became the first state to propose partial deregulation of the energy market. The initial part of the State's deregulation plan called on the IOU's, including SDG&E, to sell a large portion of their power generation plants to private unregulated companies. The investor-owned utilities therefore became largely transmitters of energy, and were expected to go to the private power generation companies to obtain electricity. Legislators hoped that this move would create market competition and drive prices down, as well as encourage continued development of in-state power sources. Northern California had relied heavily on hydroelectric power from the Pacific Northwest rather than natural gas power from within the state.

During the summer of 2000, wholesale prices for electrical energy charged by the generators to the distributors were deregulated (and therefore could be as high or low as the generators chose) while the distributors remained regulated and could charge only the

maximum retail rates approved by the CPUC.   A few large firms controlled generation. This put the generators in the position of being able to charge whatever the market would bear for electrical power.

This attempt to encourage competition in the electric industry failed. Rolling blackouts began in the summer of 2000. On January 17, 2001, Governor Gray Davis declared a state of emergency that did not end until November 13, 2003.   Gray Davis was removed as governor of California partly as a result of this crisis, and energy once again became more closely regulated, although power source and power transmission are still generally separately owned.

The energy crisis drew attention to some weaknesses in the California power infrastructure. There was one major north-south transmission line that had limited capacity and the potential to become a source of bottlenecks in power transmission (since that time the capacity of this line has been expanded). Energy producers were able to manipulate scheduling over this major line so as to impose congestion fees on the IOU's, forcing the utilities to purchase power at a high price.

Although the energy crisis ended in 2003, California policymakers learned "the hard way" that deregulation is complex and needs careful management. Both the regulators and the utilities were left with poor public reputations.

THE PROBLEM

SDG&E essentially holds a monopoly on power distribution in the San Diego/South Orange Counties area. The system is extremely complex and the penalty for failure of the system is great.   "Internal capacity" or power generated by plants within SDG&E's service area is insufficient to support peak-load power requirements in the area. Added to this is the reality that imported power is limited by the number of transmission lines available. The application for approval of the Sunrise Powerlink cites only two lines capable of bringing significant amounts of power into SDG&E's service area: the 500 kilovolt (kV) line connecting SDG&E with power sources to the east and south (the Southwest Powerlink, or SWPL), and " a series of 230 kV lines connecting through the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) switchyard to the north" (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b: I-6). The application for the Sunrise Powerlink project points out that

SONGS really "belongs" to Southern California Edison (SCE) and in the case of a power shortage, the SCE area would be first in line for this nuclear power (SDG&E owns a 20% interest in SONGS). The application also mentions an interconnection with Mexican power generators at two locations, but notes that there is "no net import capability to the San Diego transmission area." SDG&E wholly owns only two relatively small power plants, the Palomar plant and the Miramar plant (Shareholder.com 2007: 13-16).

SDG&E has tried previously to increase its access to electric power sources to support demand in its service area. The burden of congestion charges and pressure from state and federal agencies have encouraged the company to invest a great deal of time and effort in developing plans for better transmission and generation sources. Of two previous attempts to increase transmission capacity, one failed to obtain CPUC approval while a smaller project was approved. The Valley Rainbow 500kV proposed project was a 31-mile interconnection between SDG&E and Southern California Edison's transmission system. The CPUC denied approval for this project on December 19, 2002. A smaller project, the 230kV Miguel-Mission transmission line was approved in 2004 and is in place (Department of Energy 2007b). However, demand continues to grow and the "problem" has not disappeared. Therefore, SDG&E continues to search for solutions; the latest attempt to increase access to power from outside the SDG&E service area resulted in the proposal for the Sunrise Powerlink.

THE SUNRISE POWERLINK PROPOSAL

SDG&E submitted its application for approval to build the Sunrise Powerlink transmission line to the CPUC on December 15, 2005; an amended proposal was filed in August 2006. The second submission is the "official" proposal. This proposal requests approval only for a transmission project to take advantage of power sources available east of San Diego County. No new generating capacity ("green" or "dirty") is proposed, since SDG&E is responsible for transmission alone; however, the proposal indicates that a new solar facility will be built by a partner company in the Imperial Valley and that this facility will be used to generate electricity for the new line. The project consists of a 150-mile 500kV transmission line originating in the Imperial Valley of California and terminating in SDG&E's central or northern service area.

The route of the line would cross a large section of eastern San Diego County known as "the backcountry". This area consists largely of deserts, mountains and valleys and is sparsely populated. The transmission line was expected to cross the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, which includes camping and desert educational facilities.

SDG&E identifies the benefits of the project as improved reliability of energy transmission, the delivery of clean energy from renewable sources and expanded access to lower-priced power (San Diego Gas & Electric Company 2007). The financial cost of the project is identified as "between $1.015 billion on the low side and $1.437 billion on the high side" (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b: I-6).

The public version of the proposal highlights the transmission issues that SDG&E faces in delivering power to its customers:

> San Diego is the nation's seventh largest city and the nation's sixth largest county with an economy in excess of $70 billion of goods and services per year. Yet the San Diego service area lies within an electrical cul-de-sac, relying on only a single 500kV line and a small set of 230kV lines tied to the larger transmission network (or "grid") outside the region to obtain the electricity imports needed to support its economy. (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b: I-7)

A footnote points out that the portion of Orange County served by SDG&E is not included in these facts and figures. It is worthwhile noting that SDG&E will not be the sole owner of the Sunrise Powerlink (the other owners will be the Imperial Irrigation District, which supplies power in the Imperial Valley, and a non-profit Massachusetts company, Citizens Energy Corporation). Through a complex power allocation agreement, SDG&E expects to be able to access adequate power for its customers through the power line. The proposal states that if the partners drop out, SDG&E is willing to continue the project without them (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b: I-22 – 1-24).

In claiming that the project will provide more renewable energy – the "green" argument – SDG&E states that:

> The transmission line will provide access to available and proposed electricity from environmentally friendly resources such as solar, geothermal and wind power located in the Imperial Valley and eastern San Diego County. The Imperial Valley is fast becoming one of the nation's leading producers of renewable energy. But new transmission lines capable of delivering the energy to homes and business are still needed. (San Diego Gas & Electric Company 2007)

As previously mentioned, SDG&E, like other investor-owned utilities, is required by law (SB 1078) to procure 20% of its electrical retail sales from "eligible renewable resources" by 2017.

SDG&E argues that the transmission lines will also reduce energy costs by allowing increased access to out-of-region cheaper power and by increasing competition. Aging and expensive power plants can be decommissioned. And lastly, the utility should be able largely to avoid the congestion fees it would otherwise incur. The website states that these fees "cost SDG&E customers millions of dollars each year" (San Diego Gas & Electric Company 2007).

THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL PROCESS

The CPUC is the decision-making authority for the construction of new transmission lines in California. The agency takes responsibility for careful evaluation of any proposed project in the state and takes into account environmental, economic and human impact factors in its decision. The CPUC administrative process is a long one. The process may be hastened by the CPUC's desire to maintain control over state energy decisions or slowed by intervening events. The Commissioner and Administrative Law Judge have a great deal of discretion in how fast the process moves. There are few mandatory deadlines for protest filings, production of additional data, or public participation. Obviously the CPUC must give the utility adequate time to respond to questions and must provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the process; otherwise, protests would follow. In general, however, the CPUC has discretion to assign timeframes at will.

Following the second submission of the application for the Sunrise Powerlink to the CPUC in August 2006, there was a long period of review, legal filings and questions. Those opposed to the project filed legal protests with the CPUC and rebuttals to those protests were filed by SDG&E. As of September 30, 2007, seventy-seven documents related to this issue were posted on the CPUC website (some of these are separately listed cover letters and addendums that can be considered part of a larger package). Preliminary environmental and cultural resource management reports were also prepared during this time period (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b).

Many hearings were also held during the period between the application and decision. In July 2007 the CPUC held its first phase of Evidentiary Hearings on the Sunrise Powerlink Project. Various representatives from SDG&E and its supporters and a variety of opponents presented testimony, arguments and expert witnesses. CPUC Commissioner Dian Grueneich and Administrative Law Judge Steven Weissman presided over these hearings. A number of scoping and public participation hearings were held in several locations in the San Diego area, including those expected to be directly impacted by the Powerlink, in late February/early March 2008. A final Public Participation Hearing was held on May 12, 2008 in Borrego Springs, California. Four of the five commissioners attended this hearing. About 700 supporters and opponents of the Powerlink attended and many testified.

In addition to the hearings, Environmental Impact Reports/Environmental Impact Studies (EIR/EIS) were created and issued during the long time period between application and decision. A draft EIR/EIS was issued in January 2008, with 30 days for comment. This six-volume study addressed not just the proposed route of the Powerlink, but also various alternatives suggested during scoping hearings and by the public. The final EIR/EIS was issued in October 2008.

In late October 2008, after the issuance of the final EIR/EIS, two draft decisions were issued for consideration by the CPUC. The first, authored by Administrative Law Judge Jean Veitch, rejected the Powerlink in any form. An alternate decision, authored by Commissioner Dian Grueneich, conditionally approved the Powerlink along a southern route addressed as an alternative in the EIR/EIS. Conditions addressed the type of power ("green") to be transmitted along the line. Following a strong statement of endorsement by the Governor of California, a third alternative, written by Commission Chair Michael Peevey, was submitted on November 18, 2008. This alternative approved the Powerlink without conditions along the same southern route proposed by Commissioner Grueneich. All three decisions rejected the original proposed route through the state park. On December 18, 2008, the Commission voted 4 – 1 to approve Commissioner Peevey's decision. The sole opponent was Commissioner Grueneich, who continued to favor the argument that she had advanced.

Since the approval was issued, the Sunrise Powerlink project has been challenged in court by the Center for Biodiversity and the Utility Consumers' Action Network.

PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF SUNRISE POWERLINK

There are two sides to every story, including the story of the Sunrise Powerlink. Proponents of the Sunrise Powerlink agree with SDG&E's argument that the new transmission line is necessary to meet future electricity needs of the San Diego/Orange County area. The CASIO as well as various interest groupshave endorsed Sunrise Powerlink. The SDG&E website lists many supporters, including elected officials, entire cities in San Diego and Orange Counties, local and state trade, business and labor organizations and some corporate support. Some of these supporters have gone so far as to form common-interest groups, such as Californians for Clean and Reliable Energy. This coalition's website states that it is:

> …a diverse group of residential consumers, small business owners and government leaders who understand that California's strong economy and quality of life depend on a reliable supply of electricity. Just as clear to us is the need to provide a means of tapping into an area that could become a world leader in clean, renewable energy generation - the Imperial Valley. We are committed to working with regulators and California consumers to ensure that the Sunrise Powerlink becomes a reality. (Californians for Clean and Reliable Energy 2007)

This group has posted a large number of pro-Sunrise Powerlink articles on its website, and asks that individuals submit their arguments for the project for posting (Californians for Clean and Reliable Energy 2007).

Individual Supporters

Individual supporters cite a number of reasons for endorsing the Sunrise Powerlink. In response to an online interview with SDG&E Vice President Mike Niggli, some readers had the following comments:

> Let's quit fighting about Powerlink and just get it built! We need more electricity. Don't know about you, but bringing in clean solar and wind energy from Imperial Valley seems like a far better option than building more and more power plants in San Diego. (Voice of San Diego 2007)

Another responded similarly on 9/13/07:

> Just build this line. Years ago, the environmentalists and UCAN wanted a project just like this, but because SDG&E is building it, they are against it. They hate SDG&E—no matter if the project is good. They mock and oppose everything SDG&E does. We will be the ones who have trouble if this line isn't built! (Voice of San Diego 2007)

Reality Bites, responding on 9/13/07 says:

> The fact that we need more energy is not going to subside. The question is, do we take proactive action to deal with an infrastructural demand and build it the right way, or wait till it hits critical mass and do it the wrong way? I for one don't want to wait till the last second and use temporary solutions that will negatively impact our county for generations. What does the future hold if we don't build the Sunrise Powerlink? (Voice of San Diego 2007)

Other pro-Sunrise individual comments echo these sentiments. The same online interview generated response from business owners. Katie Hansen (affiliation unknown) wrote on 9/13/07:

> …The California Restaurant Association has endorsed the Sunrise Powerlink because reliable power is paramount for our members, many of whom are small businesses that rely on a steady stream of loyal customers to stay afloat. Obviously, without electricity, we can't refrigerate food, light our dining rooms or run our air conditioners. So much of what people take for granted when they walk into a restaurant depends on electricity! When you consider whether you support the project or not, please consider the needs of San Diego's small businesses. (Voice of San Diego 2007)

Other Support

The CAISO has provided strong support for the Sunrise Powerlink in conjunction with other improvements. This group of combined projects was evaluated in a report titled "CAISO South Regional Transmission Plan for 2006 (CSRTP-2006) Report – The Sun Path Project". "Sun Path" is essentially the combination of the transmission line and associated lines and transformers sponsored by Citizens Energy and the Imperial Irrigation District. The CAISO recommended the Powerlink as part of Sun Path virtually without reservation. In addition to recognizing economic, reliability and renewable resource access benefits, the CAISO noted infrastructural improvements, incentives to local generators to improve operations, emission benefits based on increased use of renewable resources and upgraded generation and the promotion of competition.

Not surprisingly, SDG&E considered the support of CAISO integral to its arguments to the PUC. In fact, SDG&E filed its amended application one day after issuance of the report in order to include it in its entirety as part of the application. As the application notes:

> The CAISO's approval is especially significant, because it is the principal entity charged under state law, and under the Commission's own electricity restructuring decisions, with planning the transmission grid so it can operate

efficiently and reliably, and to identify needed new transmission. (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b: I-3)

In a footnote, the application notes that "[a]s a non-profit public benefit corporation, the CAISO has no pecuniary incentive in whether the project is built."

Although there are scattered references to CEC support for the Sunrise Powerlink, this support is more ambiguous. SDG&E's website does not list CEC as a supporter of the project. ("Supporters" listed on the website do include past chairman of the CEC, Bill Keesel.) However, recent presentations by CEC personnel are specific in recommending the Sunrise Powerlink among other projects in the state. Although the CEC 2007 Energy Policy Plan recommendations are general in nature, that plan appears to support the project as well. As the California's energy policy-making arm, the CEC is cautious about making specific recommendations or appearing to "approve" specific projects or routes, leaving that function to the CPUC. The CAISO, as a private (albeit non-profit) corporation, appears to be more liberal with its outright support.

Other governmental bodies that have endorsed the Sunrise Powerlink include a large number of local cities, council members and mayors from those same or nearby cities (including San Diego, Poway, Escondido, Vista, National City, Lemon Grove, El Cajon, La Mesa, Oceanside, Imperial Beach, Encinitas, San Marcos, Dana Point, San Juan Capistrano, San Clemente, and Laguna Niguel). Additional supporters include one Congressman (Darrell Issa), one state senator (Mark Wyland) and four state Assembly members (Walters, Horton, Plescia and Garrick). Two water districts are listed as well (San Diego Gas & Electric 2007).

OPPONENTS OF SUNRISE POWERLINK

Arguments against the Sunrise Powerlink fall into several distinct categories. Organizations and/or individuals tend to advance one main argument against the project, with various subsidiary arguments in common with other opponents.

Consumer Advocacy Arguments

The first category of arguments is economic in nature. Some opponents of the Powerlink are convinced that SDG&E's third argument, that the Powerlink will provide access to lower-priced energy, is incorrect. The most powerful and active opponent in this

category is the Utility Consumers' Action Network (UCAN). UCAN is a relatively large ($3.5M revenue) non-profit organization that litigates on behalf of consumers on utility issues, as well as providing advocacy and general education. UCAN has not only filed a protest with the CPUC in response to the Sunrise Powerlink application, but also sends a senior representative to participate (through both testimony and cross-examination of proponents) on behalf of the rate paying public at CPUC hearings. Although UCAN's main argument is that the Powerlink will not deliver the savings that SDG&E claims will result, it also argues that the public is being misled as to the "greenness" and scope of the project. UCAN argues that there are a large number of reasonable alternatives to the Powerlink, that "green" energy can be brought in over existing power lines, that the threat of rolling blackouts is an idle threat, and that ratepayers will actually pay more with the Powerlink than without (Utility Consumers' Action Network 2007).

Environmental Arguments

A second group opposes the project mainly on environmental grounds. The major player in this group is an alliance between the Sierra Club (a lobbying organization) and the Center for Biodiversity (an environmental advocacy group). Jointly they have filed protests against the Sunrise Powerlink and, like UCAN, send legal representatives to CPUC hearings. These organizations question SDG&E's claim that the Powerlink will be used to import renewable energy; they also object to the incursion of major power lines into sensitive habitats and state parkland (Mitrosky and Zechman 2007: 14). Smaller players in the environmental area, such as the Desert Protective Council, support these filings and claims. Other organizations with broader missions have joined in the fray. One example is the Border Power Plant Working Group, which addresses power issues on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.

Grassroots Organizations

Other organizations have been formed at a grassroots level. Some, like the Community Alliance for Sensible Energy (CASE), represent backcountry towns. CASE, which has filed a formal protest with the CPUC, represents Ranchita, San Felipe, Warner Springs, Julian and Santa Ysabel. A similar alliance is the Communities United for Sensible Power (CUSP), which claims various sub-organizations, including the Borrego Springs

Citizens United for Responsible Energy, the Canebrake Community Group, the Carmel Valley Concerned Citizens, CASE itself and a variety of other groups. Other town-based organizations include the Ramona Alliance Against the Sunrise Powerlink and Rancho Penasquitos Concerned Citizens (Communities United for Sensible Power 2007). Many of these local organizations have "joined" CASE and/or CUSP, although a few maintain their own websites. The umbrella organizations argue in favor of modern, diverse, renewable and reliable energy production and are particularly interested in local generation rather than importing power.   Some of the grassroots organizations are intertwined with broader organizations; PeoplesPowerlink, a citizens' group, has strong ties through Bill Powers to the Border Power Plant Working Group (PeoplesPowerlink 2007).

These groups vary in their sophistication and involvement. Some are relatively formal, large advocacy groups (such as UCAN and the Center for Biodiversity). Others are smaller but sophisticated enough to have websites. Many are largely informal – "We meet every third Wednesday, call Joe for information!" As noted, some groups are organized specifically to defeat the Sunrise Powerlink proposal while others have broader missions.

One organization that is particularly influential with the CPUC has voiced its opposition to the project. The CPUC's Division of Ratepayer Advocates has filed a protest, citing many of the arguments put forward by the opponents of the project (economic claims, reliability claims, alternatives considered, etc.) (California Public Utilities Commission 2007b). This sub-branch of the CPUC is tasked with examining proposed projects and rates from the perspective of the residential and small business consumer, as well as considering safe and reliable service levels.

Individual Opponents

Some opponents of the Powerlink have not affiliated with any particular group. Responses to the Voice of San Diego web chat regarding SDG&E's justification for the Powerlink reveal distrust of SDG&E among other issues. Mw wrote on 9/12/07, "The true fact is SDG&E wants to use the Sunrise Power Link as an extension cord to plug into Arizona's supply of power and is using "green power" as an excuse [to] get Sunrise built." Another writer says, "After all the lies that SDG&E and its owners have done, after all the gouging and expenses that have been placed on the citizens of San Diego, this should be

done for free without charging the citizens of San Diego County…I still carry a bitter memory of the hardships brought to us from this utility company." Others echo the arguments of the organized groups by calling for self-sufficiency within the boundaries of San Diego, "In a region that has all the sun and wind it needs, it is malpractice to intentionally plan to be dependent on others." "We need in basin generation." A few responders want the backcountry left alone, "Stay out of our parkland" is probably the most succinct response in this category (Voice of San Diego 2007). Individual opponents offer a wide range of reasons for opposition, including but not limited to the arguments put forth by the more formalized opposition groups.

CHAPTER 6

PLACE, IDENTITY AND THE STORY OF THE
SUNRISE POWERLINK: RESEARCH RESULTS
AND INTERPRETATION

SENSES OF PLACE

Perhaps the best place to start with an examination of the people of eastern San Diego County and the Sunrise Powerlink proposal is with the "sense of place" discussed by so many theorists. The sense of place is a bodily experience. Many of the backcountry residents interviewed stressed their sense of place, particularly the visual. This is not surprising, since the primary sensual long-term threat of the Powerlink towers would be their visual impact. Many interviewees used recently coined terms such as "viewscape" and "viewshed" in lieu of "landscape". Use of these words seemed fairly consistent across interviewees in discussing the Powerlink project. More common terms such as "360-degree views" were also used. It is interesting that Catpac analysis reveal that the words "landscape", "view" and "viewshed" are closely associated with the words "energy", "water" and "power" – all associated with potential threats to the backcountry. Some interviewees, particularly in Borrego Springs, mentioned that they became claustrophobic when they could not see for some distance.

Associated with the visual were discussions of air, light and sky. The emphasis on air was largely on clean, unpolluted air. These images of unpolluted air were often raised as a contrast to urban air, which was considered dirty and polluted by many interviewees, regardless of what area of the backcountry they lived in. The contrast between "dirty" air and "clean" air almost seemed to be a boundary line between the urban areas and the backcountry for some interviewees. For Ramona residents the clean air starts when you drive out of Poway; for many residents further east the clean air starts when you drive out of Ramona.

Images of light and sky were particularly important in the desert community of Borrego Springs. Several interviewees spoke of the quality of the light in the desert, and the

changes in light from season to season. Nearly all the Borrego Springs interviewees discussed the importance to them of the night sky, and the fact that the Milky Way is very visible in their town. Several mentioned the town's candidacy as a Dark Sky Community. An International Dark Sky Community is, "…a town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting codes, dark sky education, and citizen support of dark skies," (International Dark Sky Association 2009).

Discussions regarding sound also occurred, but interestingly they focused on the lack of sound. Similarly to "clean" air, a lack of sound or "peace and quiet" were used to contrast urban areas with eastern San Diego County. Where the noise stops, the backcountry begins. Some residents noted the sounds of coyotes, and stressed that the howls were important because they were all one heard due to the silence.

Smells and other sensual data were not mentioned, but at least one interviewee spoke of being able to "feel" her place, including the wildlife, the changes of season, and the weather. For her, the experience of living in Wynola near Julian seems to be a sensual experience that involves her entire bodily being. This same interviewee mentioned measuring rainfall levels, taking in information both emotionally and more "scientifically".

For these residents of eastern San Diego County, then, it seems that the primary focus for "sense of place" is on the visual aspects of their environment, with a secondary emphasis on hearing. As mentioned, the emphasis on the visual and the lesser importance of the aural is to be expected given the possible impact of the Powerlink and the general Western emphasis on visual landscapes noted by Feld (1996). However, it appears that these senses of place contributed to the decision by quite a few residents to make this part of the county their home. As Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003) have discussed, the sense of place is an embodied sense, space through which individuals move and experience their environment. This sense of place is important in understanding how the Powerlink threatened these residents.

Authenticity

As discussed earlier in this paper, Edward Relph (1976) held strong views on place "authenticity". Places with meaning, places that have grown organically and reflect the

values of the community, are authentic places. One can take issue with some of Relph's judgments regarding the authenticity and inauthenticity of certain places, but his theory leads to some interesting observations about the backcountry.

By and large it seemed that the interviewees in Borrego Springs found their town to be an authentic place. In part this seemed to be a result of self-containment, and in part it seemed to be due to a sense of community with other residents. Several interviewees spoke of how little is missing from their lives in Borrego Springs. Although the town lacks some amenities, the interviewees seemed unworried about the situation and looked on forays into the "outside world" as adventures to be enjoyed, but not undertaken lightly. One interviewee spoke with enthusiasm about the adequacy of the town's single grocery store as well as the fact that the library staff can obtain books on request.   Entertainment or resources not available within the town are "extras". Two interviewees talked about driving an hour to El Centro for a movie – a special occasion! An innkeeper talked about required trips to the Palm Desert Costco for supplies as a rare occasion to be carefully planned. Otherwise, interviewees seemed to be fully engaged with the town and what it had to offer.

It should be noted that a high percentage of interviewees in Borrego Springs were actively involved in the Sponsor Group – the local organization tasked by San Diego County with planning the direction of the town. These people had done a great deal of thinking about what the town looks like, how it serves them, and the direction in which they want to see it develop. But even those interviewees who are not engaged with this group talked about the possible directions the town might take. One interviewee spoke somewhat derisively of a group that espoused opening a WalMart and another that would like the town to resemble Palm Springs. It seems that either direction would, for this interviewee, make the town less authentic. There has been a move toward making the town more of a Palm Springs resort-type community recently. Although the town was conceived of as a resort community, it has never developed commercially as have some other desert communities. The acquisition of the gated and exclusive Rams Hill Resort by GH Capital, a major developer, and the more recent purchase of the historic La Casa del Zorro hotel by the same firm have caused unease in the town. Interviewees seemed reluctant to discuss the possible implications of this situation while being recorded, speaking only of generalized development threats. In a few cases they were more forthcoming when the recording was

done, particularly when I brought the subject up and displayed some knowledge of the situation.

Julian is a different matter. Unquestionably, Relph would take one look at the main street of Julian and call it "museumized". Historic buildings (and historic reproductions) have been maintained to attract the tourist trade; at the same time there are few or no businesses to serve everyday needs. One long-time resident spoke somewhat bitterly about the closure of grocery stores and the lack of certified mechanics, general stores, doctors and gas stations. According to him, this was not always the case in Julian. Once it was a self-contained town; now residents have to "go down the hill" for basic necessities and services. Interestingly, several residents who lived in Julian did not mention the town at all and defined their place of residence as Wynola, in spite of their Julian postal address. It appears that over time, Julian has lost Relph's "authenticity".

It was hard to get a sense of either authenticity or inauthenticity in Ramona. It is possible that the demographic changes and growth in the area have fractured the sense of community for residents. However, those interviewees who lived along the Mussey Grade Road expressed a different sentiment about their more rural area. The Mussey Grade Road Association has been formed and interviewees from the area seem well versed in the local history of the road. According to one interviewee, Kimball Valley Road (off of Mussey Grade Road) is a "real" road name. "It's not a suburban name, it's an authentic name that has integrity because when you look over out these windows, you're looking at Kimball Valley." These interviewees seemed to have a sense that their specific area is authentic in a way that perhaps the town is not.

It is hard to make any generalizations about the authenticity of the small areas of the High Country remote from the larger towns - areas such as San Felipe and Ranchita. The number of interviewees in these areas – one and two, respectively – and the divergence of opinion regarding community between the two Ranchita interviewees makes any conclusions speculative at best.

In Place/Out of Place

Cresswell (1996) has raised the question of transgression, and created some ways to think about what is considered "out of place" in a given situation or locale. This is

particularly interesting in the backcountry and especially when thinking about the proposed Sunrise Powerlink. According to interviewees, there are several kinds of items that are particularly unwelcome in the backcountry – airports, major highways (or even widened roads), enthusiastic property development, and, as previously mentioned, WalMarts. All these things seem "out of place" to these residents. Similarly, the Sunrise Powerlink towers seem exceptionally out of place to opponents. Many of the opponent websites contain photos of desert or ranching areas with huge towers pasted into the scenery and captions such as "Don't let our backcountry look like this!"

Cresswell's ideas lead one to speculate that these towers are seen as a "transgression" – something inappropriate or out of the norm. It is interesting that the most obvious examples of transgressions are created as acts of resistance or self-expression. Cresswell cites three examples of this type in his book; the spray-painting or "tagging" of New York subway cars in the early 1980's, the presence of music fans at Stonehenge at midsummer, and the group of women who chose to protest nuclear armaments at Greenham Common in England in 1981. The Sunrise Powerlink differs from these examples in that the transgressor is not an individual or a social movement; it is a major corporation.

Why are the towers so out of place? As previously discussed, the sense of place that enthuses the backcountry interviewees is strongly visual, whether they live in the desert, the High Country or Ramona. In all areas, the towers are large enough to be the highest – and most visible – point in the landscape. These towers violate expectations of what the viewscape should look like – they are out of place. Cresswell also discusses violation of the line between public and private as a transgression. The Powerlink towers also violate this boundary in at least three ways. The first is in violating the viewscape, which is a private enjoyment for many people and a public resource for all. Some of the backcountry residents interviewed bought their homes specifically for the view. Much less universal (since much of the proposed Powerlink was to be built on public lands) is the violation of private property rights. One interviewee's family owns and ranches an area that would be bisected by the Powerlink. The reaction to this violation of private property is extreme; this interviewee claimed that were the Powerlink built, it would kill her father. The property is symbolic of hopes, dreams, and history for this long-time resident. The third violation concerns public parks. Nearly all interviewees, regardless of where they resided, were convinced that the

threat to the parks, both state and national, is the largest concern with regard to the Powerlink. Ross-Bryant speaks of how the national parks became symbolic and sacred to Americans. In consonance with the thinking of Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect who designed Central Park in New York City and a major influence in both the establishment of the national parks and the California state system, parks were a space of preservation without the intrusion of artificial structures (Ross-Bryant 2005: 42). Olmsted's thinking is so pervasive that one interviewee actually read a passage from his report on the proposed park in the Anza-Borrego Desert as part of the interview process. As Ross-Bryant said, the park has become a sacred site, "a place that is seen as set apart, immune to the passage of time and the imperfections of life in the world" (53). The transgression of placing electrical transmission towers in the park can be seen as a monumental challenge to religion and patriotism as well as simply a personal affront to one's daily view out the window.

Some writers, particularly Gupta and Ferguson (1997b), have mentioned the role of nostalgia in political movements. For them, this (particularly U.S. American) hearkening back to "the old days" can be a barrier to effective political action. This is interesting in the case of the Powerlink, where institutional and resistance roles seem to be reversed in some ways. Not only is the major corporation the transgressor, the resistance is invoking the "old values" in its efforts to stop the Powerlink. Normally one thinks of institutions as preserving the status quo and "resistance" as pushing back against the entrenched values. In this case, the institution is seeking to transgress against the clearly nostalgic values associated with parks. However, the transgressions against nostalgia are limited. Very early in the proposal process, SDG&E agreed to avoid the center of the town of Julian, symbolic of the gold rush days, altogether.

Cresswell (1996) notes issues of figurative dirt or uncleanliness and immorality associated with transgressions. While interviewees did not talk much about dirt during interviews (and they surely could have, the construction process would be both dirty and noisy), the theme of immorality was quite strong. Nearly all interviewees distrusted Sempra and SDG&E and many of them speculated freely on corporate motives. Comments ranged from many discussions regarding being "misled" by SDG&E (the language was usually stronger) to name-calling (Sempra, the "lounge lizard") and to accusations regarding under-the-table negotiations with the Bush Administration. Even though many of the interviewees

expressed affection for individual SDG&E employees, this researcher has no doubt that if they were asked, "Is SDG&E a moral company?" the answer would have been 100% "No." And dirt did come up in one context. Most interviewees believed that Sempra would use the Sunrise Powerlink to import "dirty power" from across the U.S.-Mexican border.

The "Backcountry" as a Constructed Space

As Low (2000) has discussed, space is socially constructed. Individual experiences and uses of a place serve to create a reality that takes on meaning for individuals and various meanings for various groups. The term "backcountry" is used frequently in the media; however, I was unsure when I began this project if residents of the area actually perceived of the place where they resided as "the backcountry." Have residents constructed a place through their interactions and memories that can be labeled in this fashion? The fact that I had used the term "backcountry" in my proposed thesis title, and it appeared on the informed consent document was somewhat problematic; however, interviewees were happy to debate the term and what it meant to them.

The Term "Backcountry" and the Diverse Reality

The most striking finding was the lack of consensus on the term "backcountry". Most interviewees were reluctant to put geographical boundaries on a portion of San Diego County that might be referred to as "the backcountry." A few were willing to do so and to include and exclude certain communities, although they were not consistent in what those communities were. One interviewee from Borrego Springs said:

> I do use the backcountry area to define…from Ramona east and then as far as the outskirts of Temecula and as far south on that border as Pine Valley, those areas of the county and I think I define that as the backcountry area because… as somebody who's grown up in the backcountry area you tend to know people in those communities. … particularly when Julian and Borrego Springs, the kids who went to high school before our high school was built here, were shipped to Julian – there's a lot of interpersonal relationships. People who've married from Julian to Borrego and Borrego to Warner Springs, so in those small communities there is a sense of camaraderie, I think, that sort of defines you from the rest of the more urban San Diego area. So I do use the term backcountry. (Interview 7/23/08)

This interviewee, a long-term resident of the community, appeared to indicate that her personal experience generated a view of the backcountry as a combined entity, rather than a collection of disjointed towns.

Two of the interviewees declined to limit the term to include or exclude various towns, noting that their concept of the area is defined largely by the highway system. They mentioned the narrower roads and more difficult access associated with the eastern part of the county.

For some interviewees, it appeared that the term "backcountry" described more a state of mind than a geographically bounded area. A lack of development, traffic and stress were all noted by a number of different speakers. Some indicated that they felt a sense of peace, or release when they left the more suburban areas and entered the so-called backcountry. There is no discernable boundary, but as Low (2000) says, difference and contrast create differing space.

Several interviewees compared the various towns and noted differences. A Julian resident, discussing his earlier short-lived residency in Ramona, said that he found Ramona to be overwhelmingly conservative and traditional. The same interviewee was concerned about interacting with more conservative neighbors in Julian as well. Presumably he feels he is substantially less conservative than many around him in many environments. However, some Ramona residents mentioned the conservatism of the Ramona community as well.

Several Borrego Springs residents also discussed the varying personalities of the communities. One is active in civic affairs in Julian and says that he sometimes tells residents of that town that he is "from the neighboring planet in Borrego Springs". Another gave his impressions of the other towns. Julian, he said, seems to be an artistic and musical community, while Ramona seems to be a "horsy" or "cowboys and cowgirls" town. Others in Borrego Springs felt that there were distinct backcountries, and saw Julian as unchanged and "old-fashioned", as opposed to Borrego Springs, which consists of "more retirees and people involved in resorts". Borrego Springs seemed to feel like a newer and more cosmopolitan community to them. Another called Borrego Springs "quite another thing" from Julian, but conceded they were both "backcountry" in a geographical sense. And another felt Ramona was just another suburb of San Diego. One interviewee said that she felt that Borrego Springs was unique from the rest of the backcountry:

> We're not really near any other communities just by virtue of the fact that we're surrounded by the park…I think we deserve our own unique - because we are San Diego's desert community and it is desert… it's a different climate, different geography, geology, everything is different perhaps from what the rest of San Diego backcountry is like, you know higher elevations, more mountainous - we're out here in the desert. (Interview 7/16/08)

Among other interviewees from the High Country or Ramona, some felt that the word was either meaningless to the interviewee or identified as a local term meaning "rural". One interviewee implied that the term was a journalistic invention created to describe the areas outside urban San Diego.

Perhaps the most compelling discussion of the term came from a fourth generation resident of the High Country (Julian/Wynola). He said, "…somebody comes up here for the first time and they go, 'Wow, you really live out in the sticks!' and I go, 'What do you mean? I live in – this is my town, it's not the sticks!' Backcountry is an ok term for it, but we've never used it, it's just, I don't know, we don't call it anything…" (Interview 9/23/08).

Interviewees were not asked specifically about differences among the towns along the preferred route of the Sunrise Powerlink and discussions about the communities were spontaneous. However, as shown in Table 1, the data obtained from Catpac support the conclusion that each town has its own character and concerns, as might be expected given the diverse history and geography of the area. Not only were there variations among the words occurring most frequently in the three groups, but also correlations of the word "backcountry" with other words were much stronger in the High Country and in Ramona and there were a greater number of words associated with that term in those towns, with the High Country interviews showing the most associations. This may suggest that High Country residents have the highest self-identification with the term "backcountry".

Therefore, I identified no broad consensus on the term "backcountry". The postmodern writers on the subject of place have virtually all agreed that place is not an essential given, but is both constructed and contested. So it is with the backcountry. There was no consensus among interviewees about what the backcountry is or about ''backcountry people". Some used the term while others rejected it and in fact identified some "other"

Table 1. Associations with the Word "Backcountry" in Various Areas of the Northern Part of East San Diego County

	Degree of Association		Degree of Association		Degree of Association
	Borrego Springs		High Country		Ramona
Area	*		0.2087		*
City	*		0.2431		0.2021
Country	*		*		0.1797
Different	*		0.1650		*
Down	*		0.2099		0.2159
First	*		0.1638		*
Know	0.1513		0.2544		0.2069
Little	*		0.1988		0.1629
Live	*		0.1874		0.2133
People	0.1568		0.2551		0.2648
Right	*		0.2118		*
Rural	*		*		0.1888
Time	*		0.1931		*
Town	*		0.1682		*
Want	*		0.2174		0.1946

* = less than .15 association

group of people as backcountry people. However, the "backcountry" is a term that is used a great deal in discussions about the Sunrise Powerlink.   It appears that although individuals may or may not espouse the term, the opposition movement has taken it on. It is interesting that one of the leaders in the opposition actually described how use of this term was discussed among her cohort. "Well it became really obvious in the beginning when it was used by journalists that we were being defined that way, backcountry people, and we had a lot of talk about that… So we thought about that word a lot, we thought, do we really want to be identified with that word."

My expectation that this term would be meaningful to interviewees was proved false. Clearly the meaning of the word "backcountry" is contested, even among those who use it in

marketing materials and websites. It appears that the Powerlink opposition is invoking an idea of place in an effort to rally support and nostalgia for open space and "pristine" views.

IDENTITY AND EASTERN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

In addition to examination of the place called "backcountry", I set out to determine if interviewees expressed a sense of common identity or identities. Many interviewees, regardless of town of residence, spoke about diversity in the eastern part of the county. Although they did not entirely repudiate the idea of a backcountry identity, they wanted to ensure that I understood that there is not one uniform kind of person in the more rural areas of the county. Several interviewees in both Borrego Springs and Ramona pointed out that there are those who come to live in the backcountry "because they're into drugs or they're drinkers and there's less law enforcement." The quoted interviewee was eager to mention that he and his wife did not fall into that group, or into the group that was "into guns." Interestingly, he did say that both he and those he was discussing were both "escaping," but from different things. And rather than being horrified by the differences, he found the diversity interesting, as did others. Julian interviewees mentioned the part-time residents of Julian, the "back-to-nature folks", ranchers, libertarians, yuppies and hippies.

Ramona residents expressed similar views, but identified different groups, including Latinos, "cowboys", artists and writers, environmentalists and biologists, "property rights people", scholars, "ridge sitters" and "canyon dwellers". Many of the interviewees seemed to revel in the variety of neighbors in their particular area. Two interviewees from the Mussey Grade Road area of Ramona were particularly interested in describing the diversity of people that lived around them. This area has been organized as the Mussey Grade Road Alliance for about ten years, and residents have had time to come to know each other and work together for common goals during that time.

The interview responses show that the so-called backcountry is not a uniform, homogenous group of people and communities even for this limited sample set. Many factors, including the differing history and geography of the towns and areas within the backcountry, as well as the varying levels of engagement in public affairs, differentiate people living in these towns and areas. The lack of clear consensus on the term "backcountry" suggests that although the battle against the Sunrise Powerlink may have

forged some bonds among individuals and communities, many individuals identify more clearly with the particular town or area in which they live.

COMMON THREADS IN PERCEPTIONS OF BACKCOUNTRY IDENTITY

In spite of the lack of consensus about terminology and the emphasis on diversity among sub-areas and residents of eastern San Diego County, the interviews revealed some common themes.   As Ortner said, identity is a complex issue, constantly constructed and changing. Common themes arose among the interviewees, particularly the "simple life", older or more nostalgic values, and a connection with others in their communities. These themes arose primarily in response to questions regarding why the area was important to the interviewee, but also came up in discussions of the Sunrise Powerlink and other threats to the eastern, more rural portions of San Diego County. In some cases they were raised in contrast to what interviewees saw as "city" values.

One theme that emerged in many interviews might be characterized as a preference for getting by with less, embracement of a simpler, less consumerist lifestyle. Many escapees from the city environment spoke of the joys of living more simply, and repudiated a consumerist attitude. Others spoke of amenities that are simply not available in the backcountry, most frequently the movies and "cultural" activities such as the symphony and opera.   Trips to the city for any purpose are a major event; the time and effort involved precludes multiple trips and discourages lack of planning.

Many who spoke of "giving up" those amenities that are available in urban living, particularly the movies, symphony and other cultural activities, were transplants from urban environments.   Those individuals spoke about choice as a factor – one "chooses" to give up certain things in order to gain the connection to nature as well as other aspects of a more rural life that they valued: peace and quiet, isolation, a lack of traffic. Hummon (1990) has theorized that preference for a particular lifestyle may be one factor in actually moving to a community that expresses those values, such as a small town. Pérez (2003) also discusses the desire for a community-based atmosphere that drives some ex-urban residents to relocate to a small or independent community. Those interviewees who mentioned "choice" were mainly ex-urbanites or formerly rural residents who had opted to return to their rural roots. Long-term rural interviewees seemed simply disinterested in a more amenity-filled life. Two

of these long-term residents spoke of movie-going as "unnecessary." Therefore, the enjoyment of living a simpler life without some of the things that urban people may regard as necessary appeared to be common to both urban transplants and long-term residents of the area. This anti-consumerist value appeared linked in some ways to what might be thought of as pioneering values, or to what the interviewee above called "old school" values and customs. The theme of survival in a harsh and remote environment came up several times. Particularly in Borrego Springs, the hot and dry desert climate was linked to a theme of survival, and of hardiness among the residents. To several, it made them a "special breed". Even according to Ramona interviewees, the surroundings were described as inhospitable, requiring diligent attention for survival. "…this is the high chaparral and there are dangers here – there are dangers that you have to be worried about, you know. There's wild animals out here, there's dehydration, the prospect of dehydration or disorientation and dehydration; you could get lost," said one interviewee.

Particularly among long-time rural interviewees the comments reflected themes that strongly echo what those respondents appear to regard as the "old" American values. These interviewees mentioned honesty, hard work, self-reliance, and respect for private property. Self-reliance also came up in connection with discussions about living the simpler lifestyle, remoteness and the harsh environment. Honesty, hard work and respect for personal property were discussed separately; almost exclusively by those who had grown up in the San Diego backcountry or in another rural environment.

This same group of respondents as well as others also discussed the importance of mutual dependence or reciprocity. Many of them noted that this seems to be counter to the value of self-reliance, but they assured me that the two co-exist very properly: you do what you can without help but calling on your neighbor for assistance when you really need it is both appropriate and polite. Privacy is important, but if you need help, the neighbors are there to provide it.

This invocation of "old school" values and customs appears to be related to nostalgia. Both Stewart (1992) and Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) have discussed how nostalgia and identification with old ways serves to order the increasingly mobile and disordered world. Identification with these traditional ways and the associations with the physical environment

may provide a sense of stability and serve to ground these interviewees in their towns and region.

Many of these values came up during discussions about differences between urban lifestyles and eastern San Diego County lifestyles. Interviewees expressed the view that these values set them apart from city residents. They saw city residents as overwhelmed, unaware of the beauty of nature on a day-to-day basis and consumers on a grand scale. Several interviewees expressed the belief that city residents didn't "know their neighbors", and were more likely to call a governmental agency, such as the police department, when assistance was needed.

With a slightly different focus, several interviewees, particularly in Borrego Springs, emphasized the human connections they believed they had in their community, and implied or stated outright that such connections were not available in an urban environment. Unlike the interviewees from other communities, their sense of reciprocity seemed to be tied to face-to-face interactions with known individuals rather than reciprocal aid.

> …we know pretty much everybody in town in our commerce and our dealings, we *know* the postmaster, and we *know* the servers in the restaurants, we *know* the checkers in the grocery store, so it's human scale in that way." (Interview 7/16/08)

> I love going into a grocery store and having people recognize me and look at me, make eye contact with me, unlike the totally anonymous experience you have when you go to a big grocery store in the city and they don't even look at you, they just push you through, on to the next customer…they know who you are, know your name, you know theirs. (Interview 8/21/08)

These values are what the great majority of interviewees described as setting them apart from urban residents: connection to their communities on a very personal level, the pioneering values, including survival in a harsh environment, and the satisfaction of making do with fewer amenities.

Many of the interviewees saw urban life as downright unhealthy and backcountry life as healthy. Clean air and clean water were mentioned numerous times by many interviewees. The amount of noise, traffic and pollution in the city were seen as things that interviewees needed to "detox" from if they spent any time in the city at all. Many saw the more open rural surroundings as both more physically and mentally healthy than the toxic city environment. Therefore, one might say that a healthy lifestyle is a value for the backcountry residents. While that may be true, for a few interviewees it appears that the city is just

unbearable and that rural living is the only solution for them. These interviewees felt that their values and lifestyle were purer than those they would encounter in the city. One well-educated interviewee put it in very academic terms indeed:

> And that's that rural, agrarian/city divide we've had in literature for hundreds of years and the idea that the city is the source of sin and the country is a source of purity. Those ideas still, I think, exist, people think that there's something sinful about cities, because oftentimes when you get more population, you get more cosmopolitan attitudes, more liberal attitudes about peoples' lifestyles and so forth. (Interview 10/6/08)

Many of these discussions were in consonance with several points of the "small-town perspective" described by Hummon (1990). In particular, Hummon cited connection to others, the conception that city people are too materialistic, and that cities are impersonal and dirty (1990: 170). The pioneering element and survival in a harsh environment seemed to be more significant than Hummon observed in the San Francisco Bay area. However, two common concerns that are not discussed in Hummon's work may be specific to this set of interviewees. The first is a connection to the land and specifically to parkland or open space and the second is a sense of second-class citizenship.

The most frequently mentioned theme was a connection to the land and nature. Almost all interviewees addressed this in some way, either mentioning the beauty of their surroundings, the natural environment, particular areas they considered beautiful or by specific identification of this connection as a common value that many if not all residents in their area held. The one interviewee who did not mention natural surroundings at all lives in the center of town in Ramona in a mobile home park and moved to the area to be near family. Many of the respondents had moved to the rural areas as adults, and they almost certainly brought this particular value with them, moving to eastern San Diego County in order to obtain what they perceived as a greater closeness to the land and environment. Long-term residents and those who originally came from a rural environment were much less explicit about this connection to the land, with the exception of two individuals who also identified themselves as environmentalists.

But even those who had grown up in the area spoke about the value particular locations and the general environment had for them, mentioning particular places that held a special magic for them, or a quality of light that they felt was unique to their area. Some interviewees referred to specific places that were important in their own histories; where

important events in their lives had taken place. These events not only have helped these interviewees assign meaning to these places, constructing a social reality of place as Low (2000) discusses, but also reinforce the sense of authenticity of place that Relph (1976) finds so critical in human connections with place. For at least some of the interviewees "watching" the changes of seasons and of the environment was an important daily activity for them. Since all those interviewed opposed the Sunrise Powerlink, it is possible that the strength of this attachment to natural beauty is related to their opposition. This may not be a universal value in eastern San Diego County, but it was very critical to these opponents of the Sunrise Powerlink.

The subject of nature, natural beauty, and the environment came up so frequently during interviews that it is worth discussing some of the specific concerns in greater detail. The original proposed route of the Sunrise Powerlink crossed the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the largest state park in California. For many interviewees, regardless of whether they lived in the most affected community, Borrego Springs, this was a major issue. In general, many interviewees saw parks as inviolable space. "And it seems wrong, especially in the park, to use a park in that way, a park is supposed to be a place set aside for people to enjoy nature, so to me that's kind of incomprehensible that there would be any thoughts of altering that with a project like this" (Interview 8/21/08).

Interviewees also saw the parks as trusts handed down by past generations, to be protected for future generations. For many interviewees this included not only the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, but also a variety of smaller parks as well as the large national parks. Several interviewees mentioned the debate (then current) over a toll road in Orange and San Diego Counties and its possible impact on San Onofre State Park. Running large power lines and toll roads through these areas seemed to many interviewees to be a violation of the intention of and investment by past generations. They discussed the amount of land that had been donated, cash donations made and tax support by the people of San Diego County over many years.

> For the last – what – fifty, sixty years, people have been donating their land to create the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. And probably a lot of those people aren't around any more, but if we had people here that had donated land, and actually my family has donated land to become part of the park, and I believe that those people when they donated that, they had the clear understanding that that was forever, that it was not just a land bank where a developer or a utility or

anyone can come along and say, "Well, we need this. We're going to take it, because we need it." I think that's just plain wrong. (Interview 9/24/08)

These interviewees place themselves and their generation in a time continuum that recognizes both the past and the future of their place.

Clearly, the level of emotion was very high when interviewees spoke about parks and the value they hold for opponents of the Sunrise Powerlink. Many urban residents also value parks of many kinds (and some of those urban residents took the time to attend public hearings to voice their concerns). However, the high value so many of the interviewees ascribed to natural beauty, natural views and the environment caused them to identify the threat to the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park as one of the most important arguments against the Powerlink as proposed. It was plainly one of the most visceral arguments for these interviewees.

The tone of discussions was preservationist in nature. It seemed that for most of the interviewees, the park system in this country is intended to maintain space in as natural a state as possible. Obviously the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park would still exist if the Powerlink were built on Park property and scientific and educational activities could still continue, but for many interviewees it seemed that the Park would be "ruined" by the loss of natural beauty. One interviewee explicitly discussed the impact on the tourist trade, but more from the standpoint of how "embarrassing" it would be to show visitors from Europe how "we" use our parkland than for very real economic concerns.

Additionally, in Borrego Springs there appears to be a symbiotic relationship between the Park and the town. Of course in practical terms, the Park is a major tourist attraction that provides a livelihood for those who operate hotels, restaurants, tours and other park-oriented amenities. Beyond that, however, there seems to be a feeling that the park and the town protect each other. Some interviewees were very explicit about this.

> This town's very unique because it's totally surrounded by the state park, and…
> to me it feels very nurturing, both ways. The park surrounds and sort of protects
> the town from what afflicts a lot of the rest of the county, the development, blight,
> and the town protects the park, people care about the park and want to do what's
> right for it, for the most part. (Interview 9/18/08)

Interviewees reiterated this theme of care taking or conservation of the land in speaking of non-park open lands as well. The theme of keeping the backcountry as San Diego's "playground" was reiterated several times. This playground reference is not new in

the narrative of the backcountry and has been used by numerous developers as well as those seeking to set aside parkland. Others stressed responsible maintenance of the land, largely to prevent fire, or to responsible use of water and other natural resources. Again, leaving the land as natural as possible was a common discussion point.

Many of the interviewees indicated that their responsibility was to a land that was virtually unchanged over time. The word "pristine" was used seventeen times in various interviews and can be seen in some of the online discussion of the Sunrise Powerlink proposal. Phrases used included "undisturbed" and "untouched". Several interviewees stated that the land, "basically looks the same as it did 100 years ago," or even "hundreds of years ago."   Of course the eastern part of San Diego County has changed substantially, but many of these interviewees ignored that in their statements. It is true that these lands are far more "untouched" than anything in the suburban or urban areas of the county, but some interviewees were surely exaggerating to make a point. Nostalgia is again at the forefront of discussions, this time about the land. In this case it appears to be used to further the Sunrise Powerlink political agenda. Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) have described how nostalgia has been used to further popular movements. In the "in pace/out of place" discussion, I noted how the apparent roles in the Sunrise Powerlink dispute are reversed, with SDG&E taking the role of "transgressor." Similarly, the alignment of rural residents with the more reactionary nostalgia "long associated with the right" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 41-42) reverses the assumption of capitalist corporations as reactionary and "the people" as progressive. One long-time Borrego Springs resident was more realistic and insightful about this concept of change in surroundings:

> I think the people who I've known who live in more urban areas become very adjusted to a faster pace of change with their landscape. Things get knocked down, things get torn up, roads come in, all of this stuff happens and I think it's accepted. I think when you live in a rural area your landscape changes very slowly. And if it changes rapidly or it changes in a big way, it's - it's very discomforting emotionally. (Interview 7/23/08)

This "emotional discomfort" may cause residents to deny the apparent aspects of change around them. One fourth-generation resident of Julian/Wynola was more realistic:

> You get used to it. And that's a sad thing, and it's also the good thing. My girls will never know the Julian I grew up in, which is sad. But by the same token, they don't know what they're missing…Their Julian started at this section in time. It's the same thing with the fires and the power lines or whatever, for that

particular generation, it's a big deal. The next one coming along is going to drive up that road and think that power line's been there since the beginning of time. (Interview 9/23/08)

To summarize, these interviewees not only identify strongly with their natural surroundings, they also feel some level of commitment to maintaining those surroundings in as natural a state as possible. For many, the concept of a "park" in some ways sanctifies their commitment and allows them to demand that commitment from others. For some that concept also represents a permanent protection from the ills of development and urban sprawl. There is also a feeling of continuity over time, of past generations' involvement with the land and with little or slow change. The words "time" and "years" both appear very frequently in the interview transcripts. In some instances these words are not significant but rather describe, for example, how old the interviewee was when some event occurred. In many instances, however, they are used to describe history or to place events or a sequence of events in time.

There also seemed to be a sense among many interviewees that eastern San Diego County is treated as a second-class area of the county. Not only were individual urban residents guilty of this treatment, so were urban local media and San Diego County government. Several interviewees spoke of the lack of knowledge of geography on the part of many urban residents. One mentioned a sign in the desert that summed up the attitude that he felt many urban dwellers had about the eastern part of the county, "This is the desert; there's nothing out here." Urban residents might have heard of Julian or Ramona, but they had never visited, and they certainly had no concept of where Borrego Springs might be located. For many, these presumed attitudes on the part of city residents extended to government and utilities, allowing a company like SDG&E to make the assumption that the rural areas of the county were "up for grabs" since there were "only a few people and some coyotes and some snakes out there and no big deal." Others felt that the lack of attention to the eastern part of the county extended to the media as well, discussing the evening news weather forecasts that speak of "East County" and mean El Cajon rather that the vast regions east of the urban areas. Many interviewees felt that not only were coastal residents ignorant of the backcountry, but that they preferred to remain ignorant.

As one might expect, along with this sense of being unrecognized goes a sense of political powerlessness, as well as a sense of being taken advantage of by the city. Several

interviewees discussed the lack of political representation that goes along with a small population (compared to the urban hordes). One might expect to encounter this attitude in the sparsely populated towns of Julian and Borrego Springs, but even a Ramona resident discussed the lack of resources committed by the county to the town. She claimed that the income generated by taxes of various kinds in the Ramona area was not fully returned to that area, and that Ramona served as a "cash cow" for the rest of the county.

This sense of being both forgotten and underrepresented came up again and again in interviews. Sometimes it was mentioned as part of a discussion about the Sunrise Powerlink and in some cases it arose in conjunction with a discussion of county governmental policies. It is hard to tell if this sense is specific to this group of interviewees or is general in the backcountry. Opposition to the Sunrise Powerlink and other projects that benefit the city and damage the rural areas may have intensified this feeling. However, it is notable that the interviewee *least* involved in opposing the Powerlink felt that the urban areas profited at the expense of the town of Ramona.

There has been tension historically between the eastern County residents and County administration. For example, although the scattered communities that have not incorporated as cities have "planning groups" the authority for development and building decisions rests at the County level. There is a strong feeling that the County Planning group has no idea (nor do they care to know) about what kinds of building standards should be used in areas outside the city. Building codes are county–wide and do not take the geographic variability of eastern San Diego County into account. Another example of this historic tension was the dispute over the establishment of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. County officials opposed this project vehemently, although they lost that battle. And today newscasts routinely report El Cajon news and weather as "East County" news and weather. Therefore, many interviewees felt they were being treated as second-class citizens, but they reject this identity.   Respondents were asked about threats to the backcountry in general, and several provided examples of "bad" policies and planning by the county government with respect to the backcountry.

Ortner (2006) emphasizes that class should be considered as part of any examination of identity. Although her emphasis is on the interrelationship of socio-economic class and racial/ethnic identity, she recognizes the approach that class is "not an objectively defined

object in the world, but a culturally and historically constructed identity" (2006: 65). All of the interviewees appeared to be Caucasian and all were sufficiently economically well off to be able to at least follow local issues and engage in conversation about them; their lives were not bound up in a struggle for survival. The kind of "class" they referred to in these discussions of second-class citizenship has more to do with a perceived imbalance of power between the large urban group and the far smaller rural group in San Diego County. This element of identity is, indeed, a constructed facet that is based in perceived reality and history.

Is this perspective justified? On the day the PUC issued its final decision regarding the Sunrise Powerlink, Channel 8 (the CBS affiliate in San Diego) news coverage at 6:30 p.m. (immediately following national news) did not announce the story; a brief banner at the bottom of the screen called the project the "Sunroad Powerlink." Channel 10 did announce the decision briefly and called the project by its correct name, and the San Diego Union Tribune considered the decision worthy of front-page coverage.

A final common theme pertains to possible urban perceptions of rural residents. During discussions of the term "backcountry", four interviewees noted that the term could be construed to have negative connotations. These interviewees seemed at least to suspect that urban dwellers might regard rural dwellers as somehow inferior in terms of education or intellect. One interviewee (Julian/Wynola) who had been heavily involved in the anti-Sunrise Powerlink movement had actually discussed this point with other leaders in the movement. As she said, "it has weird connotations in people's imaginations, some people when they think of backcountry they think of Appalachia." The members of the anti-Powerlink group with which she was affiliated felt that "city people" might have strange ideas regarding backcountry mentality. Two of the interviewees mentioned the movie *Deliverance*, a classic tale in which city people misinterpret and misunderstand local people with fatal consequences. It makes sense that the protesters would not like to be thought of as backward or lacking intellectually. The Sunrise Powerlink was a perfect opportunity for backcountry residents to counter this stereotype. One might assume that SDG&E would have great technological resources at its disposal. However, the grassroots residents did not shy away from technical aspects of the project, and in fact, they countered by calling transmission lines outdated. "SDG&E, bringing you yesterday's technology today!" said one

sign at the Ramona public hearing. The sign showed massive power lines with an Edsel parked beneath. A large number of attendees at hearings, as well as interviewees, espoused a report that presented a technical alternative plan for local generation – The San Diego Smart Energy 2020 plan. This plan was authored by Powerlink opponent and professional engineer Bill Powers, who "is an expert on regional power provision, with extensive knowledge and experience in the fields of energy and mechanical engineering, air monitoring and control equipment, and pollution and public health" (Powers 2007: 4). Being able to invoke this kind of technical firepower rejects the idea of eastern San Diego County residents as ignorant and uninformed. It also appropriates the claim to technical knowledge that SDG&E sought to assert.

Although many interviewees were former urban dwellers, and were quick to disavow any dislike of individuals in the city, there is a sense that "othering" is taking place here. This is reflected, too, in the idea that the backcountry is clean and that the city is dirty, polluted and noisy. It is possible that most of the interviewees were uncomfortable with the notion of distancing themselves from urban people, and instead chose to distance themselves from aspects of the urban environment. In fact, one interviewee was offended that I implied that there might be differences between city people and rural people in San Diego County. The only time urban people were discussed very negatively was in the heat of conversations about the need for energy in the City of San Diego and the reluctance of city residents to accommodate power plants within the city limits. This kind of "othering" was expressed in statements like the following:

> I know they, in Chula Vista, want to get rid of the power plant so they can build a stadium for the Chargers so they say the hell with the backcountry people, they can have the ugly stuff, we won't know." (Interview 7/23/08)

> Don't make the people in the backcountry have to suffer for all the excessive energy use that's happening in that area, put up solar panels if you need to, put wind power if you need to if you don't want a power plant in your neighborhood, but don't expect…the backcountry to handle the burden of the energy use that's going on in your area. (Interview 7/14/08)

> The Anza Borrego Park is not a major user of electricity, the families in Santa Ysabel are not major users, but they are being affected the most. There are better alternatives than destroying the little natural resources we have left in San Diego County. (Voice of San Diego 2007)

Another reason the interviewees may have hesitated to vigorously "slam" city residents is that opposition to the Sunrise Powerlink has not been limited to the backcountry. The kinds of networks that Bosco (2001) and Appadurai (2006) have described have clearly formed during the Sunrise Powerlink battle. A portion of the opposition has been composed of community and grassroots organizations in the backcountry, but a substantial number of urban residents attended public hearings and testified about their opposition to the Powerlink. And of course organizations like The Sierra Club, the Center for Biodiversity, and UCAN have added sorely needed resources to the opposition. "Connected yet not vertically managed" as Appadurai said, describes this amorphous group perfectly (2006: 28). As one sophisticated and very involved interviewee said, the institutional players and the grassroots players have combined forces very effectively. "[F]undamentally constituencies are built on mutual concerns over a particularly shared value," she told the researcher. The internet has added players to the network; not only is information available to those who are not associated with a group, those who leave the area have been able to stay connected. One blog on the Powerlink has been and continues to be managed by a former resident who now lives in another part of the U.S. Politicians have been involved at many levels. Lastly, even the various community and grassroots organizations affiliated and merged over time as the protest continued. It is very true that, as Massey (1997) says, place is porous and connected. Therefore, the process of opposing the Sunrise Powerlink has combated to some degree the "othering" that might otherwise have taken place.

RESISTANCE AND IDENTIFICATION WITH A UNIFIED BACKCOUNTRY

Interviewees were also asked whether opposition to the Sunrise Powerlink proposal had strengthened ties among eastern communities in San Diego County, thereby strengthening a sense of common identity. Responses to this question were varied, and appeared to depend on the interviewee's level of involvement in the protest process. Those who were most involved discussed new alliances between ranchers and environmentalists, between conservatives and liberals, and between towns that had not previously had much contact. One leader of the opposition remarked that the Powerlink protests had unified a variety of existing organizations – municipal, NGO and neighborhood - all of which had previously had separate agendas. A few remarked that SDG&E had attempted to set towns

against each other by offering preferential treatment to some in order to reduce opposition (by pledging to bury existing power lines in Julian, for example). Interviewees seemed to feel that these attempts had failed and had in fact united various factions even more strongly.

Some other interviewees thought that there was no need for the community to be "drawn together" since local populations tend to be close-knit in any case. These responses were elicited by a question that referred to the entire eastern county. However, I came away with the strong impression that these close-knit communities were more local (i.e. the Santa Ysabel ranching community) rather than eastern county-wide.

Some interviewees, including at least one very involved Sunrise Powerlink activist, expressed the view that, although the opposition to the Powerlink had unified some groups or at least provided a common ground, it had not fully unified the communities. Those who were activists had been drawn together, but as one interviewee noted, the activist group is small and unlikely to grow to include a large portion of the community. He pointed out that the same core group of people attended the meetings. I had noticed this, seeing many of the same faces at each of the meetings I attended.

It is not surprising that the most politically engaged interviewees seemed to be the ones who spoke most positively about these unusual new alliances. But even some of those who were less involved had at least noticed the rapprochement even if they had not personally participated. "Canebrake! People came from Canebrake!" And clearly, even if no solidarity emerged among the backcountry as a whole, those who participated in the opposition felt empowered, engaged and proud. Those who participated on whatever level came out with a sense of themselves as effective citizens and activists. One interviewee discussed this at length outside the recorded interview process. While once she had been disengaged and shy, she now felt herself to be an activist and a participant in local issues. Therefore, rather than developing a "backcountry" identity, it appears that at least some developed an activist identity or at least the potential to assume that identity.

Smith (1999, 2002) discusses precisely this process of forming cultural groups through political engagement. For those interviewees who worked intensively in the opposition to the Sunrise Powerlink, the sense of "belonging" to a group was heightened. Even for those who were not as actively engaged, the debate prompted reflection on the meaning of their place to them. Regardless of whether their identification was with their

specific community or the larger rural region, the struggle against SDG&E's proposal helped them forge intensified or new personal and community identities.

Time and time again interviewees stressed the diversity of the backcountry residents – in terms of politics, attitudes, sophistication, education, and many other aspects. Certainly the interviewees themselves were a diverse and interesting group. Some call themselves environmentalists, some call themselves activists and some call themselves fire survivors. But clearly these residents contest identities that they feel are assigned them by others – second-class citizens or "hicks". And certainly they seem as a whole to define themselves as somehow cleaner, healthier and hardier than other San Diego County residents, although they displace the cleanliness identity onto the environment. And today through the Sunrise Powerlink protests, many of them are finding new or reinforced identities as activists and networkers.

THE LOCAL NARRATIVE OF THE SUNRISE POWERLINK

Based on interviews and written materials (including on-line comments), the elements of the local narrative regarding the Sunrise Powerlink can be summarized as follows:

- This project represents an attempt to destroy the park system in the United States.
- This project does not benefit the citizens of San Diego County (much less the residents of the backcountry) as much as SDG&E claims since it is designed to route power to points further north. Furthermore, SDG&E and Sempra are not to be trusted.
- Power should be generated locally, within the more urban areas.
- This project will destroy valuable "viewsheds".
- This project will increase fire danger in already impacted areas.
- The people of the backcountry know what is at stake (local knowledge). If people in the more urban areas knew what was at stake, they would also oppose this project.

The park system: The perceived assault on the park system was addressed above. As mentioned, the backcountry residents interviewed and probably all opponents of the Powerlink assign high value to parks and open space.

Suspicion of SDG&E and Sempra: SDG&E has laid out its argument for the Sunrise Powerlink clearly in many press statements and the website it created for the project. According to the company, the project is necessary to provide a reliable source of electricity in the future for San Diego and also to meet commitments for green energy required by the

state. But backcountry opponents of the project tell a different story. According to them, the project represents an attempt by SDG&E and its parent company Sempra to obtain not only a precedent for access to parks of all sorts as corridors for transmission but also as a conduit for the transmission of "dirty" power from Sempra-owned plants in Mexico into the Los Angeles market. Most interviewees were aware that Sempra owns liquefied natural gas plants in Baja California as well as coal-burning plants immediately across the border. The "common knowledge" that the project was an attempt to sell power from over the border to markets further north came up several times. The original plan for the Powerlink does include a set of transmission lines from near Warner Springs to points further north. Ignoring (or unaware of) the fact that SDG&E serves portions of Orange County as well as San Diego, east county residents summarized the situation as "not for the good for San Diego."

> …someone brought up the fact that Sempra has these massive natural gas tanks down in Mexico and they're priced too high to sell directly to consumers so what are they going to do with the natural gas, "Oh, let's turn it into energy, and, ok, if we're going to turn it into energy, where's the number one market for it?" Well, it's not San Diego; it's LA. So if you draw a straight line from their energy plant to LA it goes right through the middle of Ranchita... and even earlier this year San Diego Gas & Electric and Sempra were saying "Oh, yeah, it's definitely San Diego County that we're trying to help," and then, apparently, my guess is that the CPUC whispered in their ear [that the Southern Route would be approved]… and SDG&E came back and said "Oh, no, you can't do the Southern Route because after we get done with this link we're going to be going to LA and other areas in that direction," which is obvious and the CPUC got very mad at them with regard to this… (Interview 8/20/08)

These views were universal among interviewees, and were expressed publicly in the hearings held in late February and mid-May regarding the subject. The anger regarding the "truth" of what residents had been told went further, encompassing how SDG&E had handled the project and the relationship with the parent company. Interviewees challenged SDG&E's claims related to solar power generation using Stirling solar reflectors. Many felt that there had been a "bait and switch" related to the story of the Powerlink, particularly in light of early briefings about the project. According to many interviewees, SDG&E's references to green energy had decreased significantly. Another theme that came up was the lag in SDG&E's progress toward achievement of green energy mandates – well behind the levels exhibited by Southern California Edison and Pacific Gas & Electric.

Several negative impressions of Sempra that arose out of the Energy Crisis of 2000/2001 are still causing distrust. Some of the distrust appeared to stem from dislike of "big business", but some was explicitly linked to recent past events, "…Sempra's like some big lounge lizard that took advantage of your daughter in 2000 and now he's showing up with his fancy new suit and carnation and wants the younger daughter and you'd better remember that it's the same lounge lizard, in like a nice suit of green energy, but don't forget, he's back" (Interview 9/18/08).

Local power generation: Many interviewees proposed that local generation of power would meet any need for new electricity generation and would keep that power in San Diego County. In fact, many of them pointed to the "Smart Energy 2020" plan developed by Bill Powers, founder of PeoplesPowerlink, under a grant funded by numerous backcountry citizens and fundraising efforts. This plan calls for local electrical generation within the coastal communities. Resentment against "coastal attitudes" was most apparent during discussions of this theme. Some interviewees referred to excessive energy usage by urban residents and to lack of efforts to conserve.

Destruction of "viewsheds": Also universal were comments about the visual blight that would be caused by huge transmission towers. Often the interviewees used the word "viewshed," referring to an important vista they believed would be ruined by the Sunrise Powerlink. This was especially true for the residents of Borrego Springs and for those who are emotionally connected to the Santa Ysabel Valley. It was interesting that although interviewees mentioned and were clearly aware of the monumental environmental damage that would be done by installation of the towers themselves, this damage was often explicitly considered secondary to the visual impacts expected.

Fire danger: The discussion of fire risk related to power lines was almost universal in the interviews. Several interviewees in the High Country and Ramona had either experienced damage to their homes in wildfires or lost their homes entirely. At the time the interviews were conducted, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection had identified SDG&E and Cox Communications transmission wires as culprits in igniting several major fires in 2007. Lawsuits against the two companies in connection with the fires were already well underway. Fire risk was a major topic in the February 2008 hearings, and it was clear that the CPUC was concerned about this issue. As detailed in the press release the CPUC

issued regarding the draft EIR/EIS on January 3, 2008, "Cognizant of the reliability risks posed by fires in Southern California, the study devotes over 300 pages to the fire risks posed to both the proposed and potential alternative routes" (California Public Utilities Commission 2008a: 2). Backcountry residents, particularly those who had been personally impacted by fires, felt that their testimony was more authoritative than that of others who might not live with a constant fire threat. Many of them displayed detailed knowledge of dangers of air-based firefighting amongst tall structures and live wires.

Local knowledge: Part of the discussion about the Sunrise Powerlink revolved around a perception that residents from the city were failing to oppose the project. Although some interviewees felt that opposition to the Powerlink from coastal residents had been strong, many others felt that that many urban and suburban residents, who might be potential backcountry allies had been brainwashed, misinformed, kept in ignorance, had other priorities in life or just were generally apathetic. Many interviewees thought that if the urban residents just had the facts that are "known" to the backcountry residents or if they visited the area and experienced it, nearly all would oppose the Powerlink.

> …many people who stood up to say what they have to say about this are people have a long history of coming out with their families, with their friends. Now they're bringing their own children and you could just tell that it would just pain them to see this built. I think people in the city who don't have an opinion or aren't following it very closely haven't had that experience, so it really doesn't have a personal ring for them. I think if it did, I think it would matter, which is why I think it's important that people come out here and see. (Interview 8/21/08)

This theme is supported in some ways by analysis of the words used by interviewees. The two most frequently used words, across all geographic groups in the backcountry, are "people" and "know". The theme is also reflected in the faith in public testimony that drew large numbers of people to testify at CPUC hearings; the CPUC will "know" once they are told by "the people". This claim to local knowledge is also closely related to the visual aspect of the "sensing of place." These interviewees see their environment daily, and that seeing is of paramount importance to them. It would be easy to replace the term "know" with the term "see". "If people only saw what we see", then they would know how important it is.

A second claim to local knowledge in both interviews and hearing testimony relates to the threat of wildfire. With the exception of the Borrego Springs residents, interviewees

had lived through several backcountry fires. Not only had most of them been evacuated at least once, a significant percentage had lost property. All had watched firefighting efforts and some had personally participated. Nearly all the interviewees in the High Country and Ramona discussed the fire danger. A claim to understanding more about fire threats seems entirely valid when backed by personal experience. If one were to attempt an analysis in Gee's style of the backcountry cultural model of fire, it might be something like this:

> Fire is a constant threat here in the backcountry and we expect that. However, it is getting worse as the drought continues. Several recent fires have been started by power lines. Therefore, power lines are undesirable since they are a source of fire, regardless of what SDG&E says about the type of line. Planes and helicopters sometimes run into power lines and cause fires or cause accidents during firefighting. When fires start here, they often go into the city. People in the city should think about that. We are not responsible for fire; we are very careful. A large corporation is responsible for fire destroying the city. The large corporations may well be responsible for the global warming that is causing the drought to be worse, also. SDG&E is careless and irresponsible.

As Gee (2005) says, this model may be inconsistent and incomplete. For example, this model ignores the fact that the last large fire (Witch Creek) was started by poorly maintained power lines, not because there were a lot of power lines strung about the backcountry. It also ignores any counterarguments about correlations between line size and fire hazard (an argument that has been advanced by SDG&E).

It should be noted that, with the exception of the statement that "the backcountry people know what is at stake," a claim to local knowledge, this backcountry narrative has been adopted across the Powerlink opposition. However, this narrative is more specific to the backcountry residents in its emphasis not on ratepayer or environmental issues, but on a series of arguments that have arisen as primary outside the larger organizations (although three interviewees did mention the rate issue). This narrative responds to and counters the SDG&E narrative. Instead of "reliable and renewable" we have "destructive and dangerous and inappropriate." The local issues, as well as the distrust of SDG&E/Sempra motivations were the major drivers for the backcountry interviewees and activists.

Rodman (2003 [1992]) has described how capitalist economic values and use values come into play during conflicts over space. In the debate over the Sunrise Powerlink, opponents have emphasized many quality of life issues, including the availability of parkland and maintenance of the viewshed for future generations as well as for current residents and

visitors. Although there are economic repercussions associated with tourism along the northern route (particularly in Borrego Springs), the economic impact was not a primary emphasis in the opposition narrative. "Exchange value" arguments were left to SDG&E.

How did the narrative of the backcountry residents impact the final decision of the CPUC? The CPUC considered three alternatives for approval. The draft of each alternative decision addresses many of the concerns and values of the eastern San Diego County residents. Each analysis incorporated in the drafts acknowledges the concerns about the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and each states in the Executive Summary, "Many members of the public have referred to Anza-Borrego as the crown jewel of the State Parks system" (California Public Utilities Commission 2008b: 5 – 6; California Public Utilities Commission 2008c: 5; California Public Utilities Commission 2008d: 5). Each alternative rejects the Northern Route through the Park. Additionally, other aspects of the opponents' arguments are addressed. "However, while self-interest may motivate some of the opposition to the Proposed Project, much of the opposition has arisen from an altruistic spirit, environmental concerns going beyond immediate locales, and deep reverence for nature" (California Public Utilities Commission 2008b: 249).

All three alternatives address fire dangers, although only in the rejection case was fire mentioned in the Executive Summary (California Public Utilities Commission 2008b: 7). Administrative Law Judge Vieth acknowledged the local generation argument in her draft decision rejecting the Powerlink in its entirety. However, this draft decision was not considered by the Commission in its final deliberations.

The general distrust of SDG&E was reflected in Commissioner Grueneich's proposed alternate decision. This proposed decision, which would have approved the Powerlink along the Southern Route, included substantial safeguards to ensure that the line would carry green power. The Commission ultimately rejected this alternative on various grounds; however, public comments by several Commissioners during the December 18, 2008 meeting suggest that the Commission will not forget SDG&E's statements and claims regarding green power.

How does this narrative fit into the larger narratives going on in San Diego County? The debate surrounding growth in the County is ongoing, particularly since water shortages threaten further development. According to SDG&E and the U.S. Department of Energy, there is also a shortage of electricity in the area. There is an ongoing discourse about how

much more the area can grow without stressing the environment beyond recall or limiting services to residents.

How does this narrative fit into the larger narratives going on in this country today? As a nation, the United States must decide how energy strategy should go forward. The President has committed to "green energy". What does this mean? How will transmission problems be solved? Shall the country give up wilderness and parkland in order to provide green energy for residents? As the PBS NOW program indicated, the case of the Sunrise Powerlink is a frontrunner in a debate that is yet to happen on a national basis. One interviewee spoke at length about a division within the environmental movement between "green power at any cost" and the more local movement to preserve wilderness and parks.

The fate of public lands has also been a topic of discourse over the last few years. The Bush Administration sold large tracts of publicly held BLM lands at an auction in late 2008. Many groups protested this action. The Governor of California recently threatened to sell historic sites owned by the State of California in order to raise funds to offset the looming deficit. Outrage was again the response. How to manage public lands, including parks, is an issue the country will need to deal with. As Ross-Bryant indicated, the symbolism associated with parks in general may be changing. At least one interviewee spoke at length about the small number of people who are actively engaged in actions intended to defend "unspoiled" or wilderness areas. She implied that as time passes, fewer and fewer individuals seem to be interested in putting forth the effort required to resist intrusions into these areas. The age of the interviewees as well as the average age of the attendees at the hearings seems to indicate that a generational shift is in progress. A large discourse over what is to be preserved in the United States is underway, and it may be that parks and wilderness areas are losing their importance in the national narrative of what it means to be an American.

SUMMARY

There is no single unified entity that can be labeled "the backcountry." As Smith (1999) has noted, collective action and common cause do not necessarily result in common or identical meanings. Words and phrases are contested and negotiated. Although a common narrative has arisen out of this debate, the understanding of the word "backcountry"

is still variable. The Powerlink opposition has, however, used the term to invoke a sense of open space and recreation in the minds of the public.

Diverse history and populations in eastern San Diego County express differing opinions and live different ways of life. However, the Sunrise Powerlink has provided common ground for some residents of this area. For some, it has been a call to collective action that has resulted in strong relationships with other communities and individuals in the eastern area of the county. For others, it has been a subject that all can agree on. And it is apparent that, at least among those individuals interviewed, there are some common threads of belief. A nostalgic sense of pioneering values, including coping with a harsh environment, connection to the land and nature and a preference for making do with less are common themes. In particular, there is a strong affiliation with the concept of parks, whether state, national or local. In Borrego Springs the relationship with the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is nearly symbiotic for some residents. Others have a sense of care taking and conservation for any "unspoiled" land. Some express the idea that many of the areas in the eastern part of the county have not changed in many years and are indeed pristine. Additionally, interviewees express a sense of being a forgotten part of the county. For some residents, the entire eastern part of the county is neglected, for others, "it's like they get to the apple pie and they stop – after Julian nothing exists." This sense of being a neglected entity is accompanied by a perception of political powerlessness and second-class citizenship.

Regardless of whether or not interviewees used the term "backcountry," these values form the core of a sense of common identity for these interviewees. The local narratives regarding the Sunrise Powerlink draw on several of these values, particularly those regarding nature and parks. The distrust of SDG&E and Sempra is related in some ways to the concept of political powerlessness and lack of recognition. Local knowledge is also a factor in the narrative; if "people knew" what backcountry residents knew, they would oppose the Powerlink. The Powerlink has also give interviewees the opportunity to clarify and to express what their "place" means to them, regardless of its name.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

If we are to use the interviewees as a sample set, we could say that the people of eastern San Diego County are an interesting and diverse group. Of course, this research concentrated on only a small subset of people living in this part of the county. Any conclusions that I have drawn pertain only to this small subset. However, the issue of the Sunrise Powerlink and the strong opposition to its construction shed light on some aspects of living in this part of Southern California that might not otherwise have been readily seen. Aspects of the land and community that are treasured by local residents were thrown into high relief by the threat of these massive towers. The debate provided a framework within which people could reflect on what "their place" means to them. And, to some degree, it seems that the sense of community and possibly the beliefs were strengthened by the protests.

The people represented by this subset of eastern San Diego County do not subscribe to any unified identity or consensus on the term "backcountry." Indeed, residents stressed the diversity of the town cultures themselves as well as heterogeneity within each area. This is not surprising, particularly given the varying geographical roots of the residents of this part of the county. However, some common themes emerged: a connection to land and nature, with an emphasis on parks and preservation, an attraction to a simpler, less consumerist lifestyle, and an upholding of what might be called "old" American values, reminiscent of the pioneering way of life. Additionally, interviewees valued human connections and the kind of reciprocity that is represented by neighbors helping to catch a loose cow. Interviewees also identified the backcountry as conducive to health by providing a cleaner, more peaceful setting in which to live. Cleanliness extended beyond clean air to encompass clean water, a lack of light pollution, and the slower pace of life that maintains a healthy state of mind.

The residents of this area have constructed their own narrative of the Sunrise Powerlink. According to this narrative, the project is an attempt to destroy the park system in

the United States, is of less benefit to San Diego than SDG&E claims, will destroy the visual sense of place that residents and visitors currently enjoy, and will increase fire danger. Power should be generated locally by those how need it. Lastly, a claim to local knowledge is asserted; if urban residents "knew" the backcountry, they would oppose the Sunrise Powerlink.

Analysis in light of theoretical literature reveals the strong visual sense of place experienced by the residents of eastern San Diego County. A secondary aural sense of place is also exposed. The varying levels of authenticity expressed by residents of the communities are also explored, although findings beyond Borrego Springs are somewhat thin. An analysis of why the power lines are "out of place" develops an awareness of "who is transgressing" in what fashion and how the proposed towers would violate the norms of the backcountry. The imagined towers violate the strong visual sense of place enjoyed by rural residents (as well as actually violating private property). And most vehemently, the proposed transmission lines violate the concepts associated with parkland. Ross-Bryant (2005) has discussed in detail the American concept of a national park as an inviolable and sacred space. As she notes, the values associated with parks may be changing. The interviewees, however, appeared to adhere to the preservationist line of thought. Nostalgia seems to play a part in eastern San Diego County residents' thinking about parks, as it does in some of their other values. The Sunrise Powerlink, by crossing California's largest state park, appears to be a particularly monstrous transgression.

Although residents do not present a unified identity, even in the face of the threat posed by the Powerlink, research has revealed some sense of common bonds developing among citizens in the area. There has been some degree of "othering" taking place around this issue. The "other" seems to be rather vague, consisting, for example, of those who use power heedlessly and expect it to be available on demand, those who want to tear down the power plant in Chula Vista in favor of a football stadium, or developers who not only impinge on the backcountry but who are also to blame for the growth of power needs in the urban areas of San Diego. Hindering the development of a clear "other" are two factors. First, networks have formed between backcountry opponents of the Powerlink and urban-based organizations such as the Sierra Club and UCAN as well as individual urban residents who strongly oppose the project. Additionally, many of the rural residents are "ex-urban,"

former city residents themselves who cannot entirely condemn the urban residents without also condemning themselves.

Individual identity claims among backcountry residents do seem to have been strengthened by two factors related to the opposition to the Powerlink. The act of engaging in political opposition to the power line has, according to some residents, developed a sense of empowerment. Some who had never been involved with activism in the past "found" their identity as political activists in this struggle. Secondly, individuals were able to make statements about what they are *not* - they are *not* hicks and they are *not* second-class citizens of the County.

The eastern San Diego County narrative that developed around the Powerlink is revealed as a claim to local knowledge as well as a counternarrative to the SDG&E rationale for the transmission lines. Not only is a local "sense of place" invoked, but a claim to greater understanding of backcountry fire risk is also presented. It is clear that this narrative fits into larger discourses currently developing in the United States. How will green energy be transmitted? How will public lands be used? What will state and national parks look like and how will they be used in the future?

Eastern San Diego County is not an area that seems like a traditional site of study for an anthropologist. However, as Rosaldo (1988, 1989) noted, it is not only the geographically remote groups that are interesting and fruitful to study. In today's world, people are moving globally, forming new groups and new cultures in a variety of locales and in a variety of ways. Applying the theories and methods of anthropology can be done at home as well as abroad. Differences may be harder to see when self and other coincide or overlap; however, results may be just as interesting and unique to a particular place and time. This thesis was originally conceived of as an applied anthropology study, similar to the kind of analysis that is often done by international development agencies prior (one hopes) to construction of a dam, for example. In such an analysis, anthropologists may attempt to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the project affects each of the stakeholders. In order to understand how the project affects each group, it is necessary to understand the values held by the stakeholders as well as practical considerations such as economic impacts and property destruction. The Sunrise Powerlink project parallels such international development projects in a number of ways, and anthropological techniques can be applied fruitfully within

the United States as well as abroad to fully understand the positions of various groups affected by any large project.

It seems to me that such understandings are critical in the United States today. In the face of the threat of global warming, we must make critical choices about how power will be generated and transmitted. The Sunrise Powerlink truly is the "test case" in the national discourse about green energy produced on a large scale. Issues have surfaced that seem to have been unexpected by either SDG&E or the CPUC. Some of the pain and rancor surrounding the debate might have been avoided had the international development model been used before the project was ever proposed.

Anthropology may also provide a voice for the thoughts and needs of various stakeholders. In this case, Powerlink opponents were more than competent in attracting media attention, presenting cogent arguments in writing and verbally to appointed and elected officials and in explaining their point of view, producing films, holding fundraisers and generally acting collectively. Future projects may involve stakeholder groups that are not as able as the Powerlink opponents to organize, form networks, or be heard. This is as true within the United States as it is in developing countries.

Even in cases in which a stakeholder group is able to act effectively, the anthropological approach may provide a different way of examining the issues at stake. This thesis has added that additional layer of understanding in examining issues of place, identity and narrative that might not be readily apparent to individuals. Lastly, anthropological writing may educate members of the academic community about issues surrounding the project. Input from the academic community may help to achieve stakeholder goals or reach a more balanced, informed conclusion.

In the case of the Sunrise Powerlink debate, opponents chose to ignore certain very pertinent issues and arguments. Powerlink proponents often accused backcountry opponents of "NIMBYism" (Not In My Back Yard). Opponents countered this argument by invoking larger issues such as environmental concerns and the sanctity of parks. Alternatively, they proclaimed that the backcountry served as a backyard for all of San Diego County and that all residents of the county should be NIMBY's. However, now that the southern route has been selected, the focus of citizen protest has moved to communities like Lakeside and

Alpine; only the most committed of the activists from the original route remain involved. For others, the "NIMBY" accusation may have been somewhat valid.

For the most part, opponents also ignored economic issues, including possible loss or reduction of tourism income. This is surprising given that at least a few interviewees in Borrego Springs could have been personally financially impacted if tourism suffered as a result of the disruption during construction and the eventual damage to views in the State Park. Property values might also suffer, not only in Borrego Springs but also at other sites close to the proposed Powerlink. Ratepayer issues seem of little value in the backcountry narrative of the Powerlink. Interviewees did not discuss these economic concerns; instead, they focused on their sense of place and again took the moral high ground with environmental and public land issues.

Interviewees also ignored the very real political and legal pressures on SDG&E. Failure to meet renewable energy targets in a timely fashion will result in substantial fines for SDG&E and its parent, Sempra. Rarely did interviewees acknowledge these concerns on the part of the corporate player, although some did point to the Smart Energy 2020 plan as an alternative. Additionally, the Southern California energy "cul-de-sac" has attracted both state and federal attention as a potential weak link in the delivery of power nationwide, and pressure to build additional capacity was surely high at a variety of levels. The fact that SDG&E serves southern Orange County as well as San Diego was also ignored in identifying the north spur as "for Los Angeles." Ignoring these factors affecting SDG&E allowed opponents to adhere to an argument based on other issues.

Groups often ignore real issues and real arguments in their effort to advance the cause. In the case of the Sunrise Powerlink, backcountry opponents chose to emphasize their sense of place and identity in order to attract supporters. Nostalgia for a past way of life as personified in small town life, and belief in maintenance of "pristine" open space and parkland have provided major arguments against the Powerlink. It is important for anthropologists to pay attention to how this kind of emphasis can be used by groups in gaining attention and public sympathy, as well as recognizing that these factors are truly important to those impacted. Awareness of these kinds of issues and strategies, along with understanding of the local details and populations involved, can allow the anthropologist to evaluate many different kinds of projects in many different places.

Leaving issues associated with public protest and large-scale projects aside, the communities of eastern San Diego County present an interesting area for study in general. The backcountry is as diverse as interviewees claimed. There are groups in this geographic area that were not even encountered in the scope of this research. Directions for future anthropological exploration in this part of San Diego County are nearly limitless. The depth of information in this research was necessarily shallow, since such a large geographic area was chosen for study. Since each area surveyed appears to display differences in emphasis on various values and conceptions, even in light of the unifying issue of the Powerlink, an in-depth study of each town separately would add immensely to the understanding gained here. "Thick description" has not yet been achieved. One area that bears further research is the question of whether Borrego Springs as a whole represents a "gated community". Although there are gated communities within the town, a sense has also arisen that the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park acts as a fence. This would involve further research into what residents fear, and although there was some emphasis on threats to the community in this research, this topic could be considerably expanded. Hopefully this thesis provides a "jumping-off point" for future study.

Outside the issues of place, identity, narrative, place and power and on a personal note, I would encourage any and all, whether involved in research or not, to attend a public hearing on any issue of concern, particularly if the individual has not been especially involved in political processes. The CPUC hearings actually made me proud to be an American for the first time in a long time – proud of my fellow citizens and proud of the kind of process that lets individual voices be heard. While the CPUC decision was a disappointment, the respect shown for varying viewpoints and emotions was faultless in all the hearings I attended.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION

Interviewee 1: Julian (Wynola), master's degree, part time work at garden center, third generation resident

Interviewee 2: Borrego Springs, master's degree, innkeeper/owner, marketing business, resident five years

Interviewee 3: Borrego Springs, high school, park employee, various areas of the backcountry for twenty-five years, eleven in Borrego Springs

Interviewee 4: Borrego Springs, high school and a few college classes, homeowner's association manager, resident for thirty-nine years

Interviewee 5: Borrego Springs, high school and some college classes, retired, resident for twenty years

Interviewee 6: Borrego Springs, high school, retired, resident for twenty years (Interviewees 5 and 6 are husband and wife and were interviewed simultaneously)

Interviewee 7: San Felipe (Warner Springs), associate's degree, self-employed, resident about thirty years

Interviewee 8: Julian, some post-graduate work, professional environmental advocate, resident five years

Interviewee 9: Julian, some college, retired disabled firefighter, resident in Ramona and Julian for fourteen years

Interviewee 10: Ranchita, some post-graduate work, realtor and jack of all trades, resident for six years

Interviewee 11: Borrego Springs, bachelor's degree, retired teacher, public information officer and journalist, resident two years

Interviewee 12: Julian, some college courses, mortgage broker, third generation resident

Interviewee 13: Borrego Springs, bachelor's degree, tour owner/operator, resident for three and a half years

Interviewee 14: Ramona, some post-graduate work, nurse, resident for four years

Interviewee 15: Ramona, law degree, full-time volunteer activist, resident for ten years

Interviewee 16: Ramona, bachelor's degree, clergy, resident for eight years

Interviewee 17: Julian (Wynola), associate's degree, civil engineer, fourth generation resident

Interviewee 18: Borrego Springs, bachelor's degree, resort owner/operator and fruit grower, resident for twenty-eight years (part-time but full-year)

Interviewee 19: Ranchita, high school, marketing business (self-employed), resident for eight years

Interviewee 20: Ramona, two years of college, pool and spa mechanic, resident for fourteen years

Interviewee 21: Ramona, bachelor's degree and teaching certificates, owner/operator of dance studio, resident for "almost fifty years"

APPENDIX B

PRACTICAL LESSONS LEARNED AND ADVICE
TO OTHER RESEARCHERS

Some practical considerations: first, any ethnographer should use the highest quality recording equipment possible and select interview venues with care. While probably nothing of irretrievable value was lost, there are instances in which background noise and operator error resulted in a frustrating loss of data. Additionally, the transcription process was far harder than expected without the ability to run back and forth through the recordings. Transcription is soul-deadening at best, and should not be made harder by the use of inadequate equipment.

Secondly, the Catpac software was perhaps less suitable for the analysis of conversational speech than one might hope. Use of filler words and interjections by interviewees made analysis tricky, as did stops and starts and sudden digressions in conversations. A high degree of subjectivity also comes into play as the researcher decides whether certain word correlations are (or are not) significant, and which terms should (or should not) be included. It may be that ongoing experience with the program might yield more significant data and conclusions. It is an easy-to-use, friendly program to execute; the interpretation is the hard part.

A challenge that arises when studying people close by rather than far away is the degree to which differences from nearby populations are muted. Ethnography to some degree is easier when there is some level of "othering" in order to throw values and beliefs that are specific to or particularly strong for a group of people into high relief. This was difficult for me, who "matched" my informants in many ways. While this resulted in rapprochement and therefore possibly greater openness during some conversations, it also made it difficult to parse out those attitudes and beliefs that had led these people to stake out their territory in eastern San Diego County. I also went in with my own impressions as well as a set of beliefs about why one might want to live in this part of the world (since I sometimes considers doing so myself).

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

San Diego State University

Consent to Act as a Research Subject

Backcountry Identity and the Proposed Sunrise Powerlink Project

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators: The principal investigator for this research is J. Elaine Michaels. She is a student in the Masters Program of the Department of Anthropology at San Diego State University. Her supervisor for this research project is Dr. Fred Conway, PhD, of the Department of Anthropology at San Diego State University.

Purpose of the Study: Ms. Michaels is conducting a study to talk to people who live in the eastern portions of San Diego County. The purpose is to find out if people who don't live in the city or suburbs of San Diego County think they are different than the city and suburban people and if they do, what they think the differences are. She is also trying to find out if the proposed Sunrise Powerlink project has caused those differences to seem greater or if it doesn't have any effect at all. Twenty or twenty-five adults from this area of the county will be interviewed.

Description of the Study: If you choose to participate, Ms. Michaels will spend one or two hours with you asking some questions and discussing the area you live in, how you feel about differences between city and east county residents, and what you think the Sunrise Powerlink proposal says about those differences if anything. The interview can take place at a location of your choosing and at a time that is convenient for you. Ms. Michaels may do a follow-up phone call or short follow-up meeting if she has questions about something she didn't understand or something new comes up.
There is a possibility that you could be interviewed simultaneously with another person, answering the same questions at the same time. If you have any objections to being interviewed with anyone other than the investigator present, you will be interviewed separately.
Interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed at a later time. The transcriptions will be considered confidential and will be stored in a locked container.

What is Experimental in this Study: None of the questionnaires used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis."

Risks or Discomforts: There is a possibility that some questions may lead you to respond with information that may make you uncomfortable (for example, your income or source of income, feelings that you might think were "politically incorrect", etc.). If you find yourself uncomfortable the researcher will discuss the subject thoroughly with you at the end of the interview. In any case, if you begin to feel uncomfortable, you may discontinue

participation, either temporarily or permanently. If you choose, the audiotape and any notes and transcripts will be destroyed and not used in the study.

Benefits of the Study: You will hopefully enjoy sharing your thoughts about what it means to you to live in San Diego's backcountry, and you may gain personal insights from talking in depth about the subject. You may also find that insights may help you in any political activism surrounding backcountry issues. Additionally, people living in the urban and suburban areas of San Diego County may also gain insights into how and why decisions made in the city affect people living in more rural areas. There are few studies of the people in this part of San Diego County, and the researcher hopes that the information resulting from these interviews will make people more aware and sensitive to backcountry issues. The researcher **cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study**.

Confidentiality: **Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed by law.** Your responses (audiotapes and transcription) will be coded with a number that will be assigned to each interviewee. A pseudonym or "false" name will be used for publication. If the information revealed may result in identifying you, in spite of the pseudonym, the situation will be discussed with you and if you choose the data will be destroyed. A list linking pseudonyms with your "real" name will be maintained in a locked drawer in the Ms. Michaels' home until research is complete. At the time the linking list will be destroyed. Audiotapes, transcriptions and researcher notes will be kept in a locked drawer at the researcher's home for five years. Identities of the individuals shall be removed from all documents upon completion of the project. If you choose, you will be able to review and edit the tape(s) and transcriptions prior to any publication. Federal regulations require that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) periodically review all approved and continuing projects that involve human subjects. To ensure that your rights as a subject are being protected in this study, it is possible that representatives of the Institutional Review Board may come to this research site to inspect study records.

Incentives to Participate: No compensation is offered for participation beyond buying a cup or coffee or similar item while the interview takes place.

Costs and/or Compensation for Participation: The only cost you may incur to participate in this study is the cost of transportation to the location of your choice for the interview.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: **Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.**

Questions about the Study: **If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact Elaine Michaels – (760) 473-5406.**

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Administration San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

<u>Consent to Participate</u>: **The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board's stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____

Name of Participant (please print)

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date