

Not in My Backyard!

In July of 2021, the California-based company Arevia Power announced that they were scrapping plans for a large solar farm in Southern Nevada. The initiative, known as the Battle Born Solar Project, would have created the largest solar farm in the United States and provided daytime power to around 500,000 homes.¹ Despite assurances from Arevia Power that the project would be set far enough back on the nearby mesa so as not to be visible from the closest town, local residents fought against the construction of the solar farm. They argued that the solar farm would discourage popular recreational activities such as biking, driving ATVs, horseback riding, and visiting the famous environmental art sculpture *Double Negative*.²

Proponents of the project argued that it would have created 2,600 jobs and helped Nevada towards its goal of producing 50% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030. A ballot question in 2020 found that a majority of Nevada voters supported a transition towards renewable energy. One of the residents even said, "I'm not against renewable energy, I'm just against losing this beauty."

People who oppose such projects are said to have an attitude of "Not in my backyard!"—often shortened to "NIMBY." When residents of towns and neighborhoods disagree with a project being built near them, they will often band together to oppose it. The protested projects vary wildly in their impact to the community—everything from zoning changes and energy projects to affordable housing developments and landfills. While some argue that NIMBYism has contributed to rising housing costs and blocked many beneficial projects, others argue that communities have a right to oppose projects that will affect their neighborhood's character.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Under what circumstances is a "NIMBY" attitude towards development morally permissible?
2. How should we evaluate the tradeoffs between the good of a larger entity (a state, a country, or the world) and the good of a local community?
3. When making a decision, how should we weigh the negative impacts on those *directly* affected against positive impacts on those who are *indirectly* affected?

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/technology-government-and-politics-environment-and-nature-las-vegas-nevada-9bf3640dfefbc6f7f45a97c6810f5ff7>

² <https://electrek.co/2021/07/26/us-largest-solar-farm-is-scrapped-because-nevada-locals-dont-want-to-look-at-it/>

