

FOUNTAINS IN A DESERT: PLACE-MAKING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IN
SNAKE VALLEY, GREAT BASIN AGAINST SOUTHERN NEVADA WATER
AUTHORITY'S GROUNDWATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how a diverse coalition of rural residents, ranchers, Native American tribes, and environmental activists—many of them united under the grassroots organization known as the Great Basin Water Network (GBWN)—have successfully created, used, and negotiated differing senses of place to resist the construction and implementation of a rural-to-urban inter-basin water transfer project. The Groundwater Development Project, first proposed in 1989 and later revived in 2004, is an effort by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) to obtain water for the expanding Las Vegas metropolitan area. However, in the face of fierce resistance, led by the aforementioned coalition—which is centered in Snake Valley on the Nevada/Utah border—SNWA has yet to be granted the legal precedent to complete the multibillion dollar pipeline project. Drawing from the theoretical lenses of place-framing and relational place-making, this thesis shows that the social construction of place is a powerful tool in grassroots organizing and politics; a tool, in this case, that has been greatly enhanced through an existing network of people and places, originally formed in the early 1980s to resist the MX Missile Project, which has been effectively revived to engage in protest against SNWA's Groundwater Development Project.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, there has been much scholarship that investigates a transforming American West. As a place of expansive urban population growth, scarce water resources (which are predicted to become scarcer because of climate change), and changing land-use patterns, the problems resulting from the convergence of these issues in this region are frequently framed as a conflict between a more rural, traditional and agricultural “Old West” and a more urban and modern “New West.” In particular, the problems resulting in this clash of Old West vs. New West have been researched extensively in rural places where urban migrants are constructing homes for the sake of enjoying the amenities associated with rural living (Robbins et al., 2009).

Although the construction of Old West vs. New West is problematic, as it does not shed light on the nuances and complexities of rural people in rural places, there is some truth behind the rural-urban divide this construction perpetuates. For example, as populations in metro areas in the American West continue to rise, so too does their need for water, especially in arid cities in the American Southwest. This is forcing some growing urban areas to look for new ways of acquiring additional water, including in the form of inter-basin water transfers from less populated rural areas, causing great tensions and conflict between some urban and rural populations. This is currently the case in Las Vegas, Nevada, where the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) wants to implement its Groundwater Development Project, a would-be large inter-basin water transfer that would pump groundwater from rural valleys in eastern Nevada and western Utah to the Las Vegas metro area.

SNWA's project would not be the first large scale inter-basin water transfer project in the America West. In fact, inter-basin water transfers have a long and contentious history in the American West, with the most well-known example being the case of the Owens Valley and the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913. The events surrounding the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and the subsequent environmental damage occurring in the Owens Valleys, is sometimes referred to as the California Water Wars (Reisner, 1993; Walton, 1992). In this instance of history, a once productive agricultural valley east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains was turned into a dustbowl for the sake of sustaining a growing urban population in Los Angeles, California.

Despite fierce and sometimes violent resistance by the rural residents living in the Owens Valley in the early 20th century, the Los Angeles aqueduct was made possible in part by a federal government that favored the development of a city over 200 miles away from Owens Valley, and in part by the failure of those protesting the aqueduct to form effective alliances, particularly against political coercion and infiltration by LA Aqueduct proponents (Walton, 1992). Today, the resulting dust pollution from the dried-up Owens Lake gives Owens Valley the worst air quality in the country (Reisner, 1993).

Although there are many differences between the resistance posed by those early 20th century opponents of the LA Aqueduct and the current stakeholders opposing SNWA's project, there are some similarities. SNWA's project would be similar in scope—both in terms of the amount water extracted and environmental damaged caused—to the Owens Valley, and in both cases a rural population finds itself pitted against a powerful alliance of urban actors. One of the biggest difference between the

two, however, is that the resistance against SNWA has so far been largely successful. Contrary to the failures rural Owens Valley residents experienced in their attempts to stop the construction of the LA Aqueduct, this thesis tells the story of how those protesting SNWA's Groundwater Development Project have so far been successful in their endeavors.

Formed in 2004 in response to SNWA's proposed pipeline project (which was revived from an earlier 1989 project), GBWN is a diverse coalition of people from rural ranching communities, Native American groups (of Goshute and Shoshone origins), and urban-based environmental organizations. This very same coalition of stakeholders was originally brought together in the early 1980s in protest against the US Government's proposal to install a large nuclear missile operation (the MX Missile Project) in the Great Basin Desert. Aside from stopping the implementation of SNWA's pipeline project, the purpose of the GBWN is to engage in dialogue about water conservation in rural and urban places throughout the Great Basin.

Using the theoretical lens of "place-framing," first put forth by Martin (2003), who adapted collective-action frames put forth by Snow et al. (1986), the primary goal of this thesis is to investigate the role place and place-making plays in the social movement against SNWA. Specifically, this thesis seeks to answer the questions: *How has place been framed, and to what effect?* In order to accomplish this, I have performed a frame analysis of the social movement organization that has been most actively resisting SNWA's pipeline project, the Great Basin Water Network (GBWN). This analysis uncovered the processes of "relational place-making" (Pierce et al. 2011) by investigating the role networks (of people and places) have played in GBWN's opposition to the

pipeline project and their ultimate successes. Additionally, because of the legal successes that GBWN and its allies have had in their resistance to SNWA's pipeline project, the final goal of the case study in this thesis is to illuminate how and why GBWN has been so successful in their political/legal endeavors against SNWA, unlike many other rural stakeholders, for instance those from the Owens Valley in the early 20th century.

Chapter 2 provides additional background on SNWA's Groundwater Development Project and information on the legal fights GBWN has waged against the pipeline project. Chapter 3 presents relevant literature on place-making, rural protest, framing and collective action frames, and relational place-making. Chapter 4 is an overview of my research methodologies. It also provides geographical information on Snake Valley and the surrounding valleys, and the adverse effects that SNWA's pipeline project would have on them. In Chapter 5, I present and discuss the place-frames GBWN used in their fight against SNWA. Some of the findings from this chapter show that GBWN created a set of diverse place-frames in order to appeal to both rural and urban residents that simultaneously created logical contradictions that stakeholders then had to negotiate in their activism. In Chapter 6, I shed light on the role networks have played in GBWN by drawing from the concept of relational place-making. Last, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by reiterating the overall findings from the previous chapters, as well as discussing how this movement relates to the importance of water conservation in the American West.

Chapter 2: Background

Las Vegas, Nevada has been called the “absolute antithesis of rural” (Jackson and Kuhlken, 2006), and for good reason. It has long since evolved from its days as a sparsely populated stagecoach stop to what it is now: an international destination for gambling and entertainment with one of the United States’ fastest growing populations (Anderson, 2013; Jackson and Kuhlken, 2006). In fact, during the early 2000s, as many as 7, 000 people a month were moving into Clark County, resulting in the suburbanization of much of the city’s desert perimeter (Jackson and Kuhlken, 2006). This sprawl has converted desert washes and arroyos—and the unique riparian flora and fauna that accompany them—into cookie-cutter subdivisions and concrete canals. During the first decade of this century, homes were being built so fast that people had moved into them before local municipalities had constructed the infrastructure necessary to connect them to public utilities (Jackson and Kuhlken, 2006). Then, during the recession of the late 2000s, Las Vegas’s population boom appeared to be finally slowing down (Coolican, 2010). As the recession passed, however, its population growth began to soar once again, and today the Las Vegas Metro area has over 2 million people (Anderson, 2013).

Aside from but intrinsic to the infrastructure problems and environmental degradation associated with such rapid growth in an arid region, there is a more pressing issue facing Las Vegas: water. On average, Las Vegas receives only four inches of precipitation a year, and has access to a mere 4% of the ever-dwindling Colorado River—an allocation that was first negotiated back in 1922 when Nevada’s population was under 100,000 people (Cooley et al., 2007). Adding to this dilemma, scientists predict that

climate change will further reduce the amount of potable water in the United States Southwest with more severe and prolonged drought becoming the regional norm (Barnett et al., 2005). In conjunction with the fact that Las Vegas is more inefficient and wasteful with water when compared to other Southwest cities of similar size and aridity (Cooley et al., 2007), these conditions make the problems and realities associated with Las Vegas's lack of water particularly dire.

In an effort acquire more water, in 1989 the Las Vegas Valley Water District (LVVWD) applied for unappropriated water rights with the Nevada State Engineer in order to withdraw groundwater from 26 hydraulic basins in northeastern Nevada (Dubuc, 2007), for the purposes of transporting it to Las Vegas by way of a 300 mile underground pipeline. In response to the applications, the LVVWD received over 3,600 objections from over 900 different parties (mostly from rural complainants), which forced a reduced request to withdraw water from 17 hydraulic basins (Dubuc, 2007). However, because of the controversial nature of the applications, and the fact that the LVVWD was able to renegotiate and increase the amount of water it received from the Colorado River basin (where 90% of the Las Vegas water supply comes from), the LVVWD eventually decided to cancel this plan altogether, although the water rights applications were still kept on file with the Nevada State Engineer (Dubuc, 2007.)

In 2004, with a major drought and unrestricted development serving as the impetuses, the successor to the LVVWD, the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), began its push to resurrect the 1989 water rights applications in what is now called the "Groundwater Development Project" (Longson, 2011). This time around,

SNWA reduced its petition for water rights to aquifers in five sparsely populated rural valleys to the north: Delamar, Dry Lake, Cave, Spring, and Snake (see Figure 1).

The last of these valleys, the Snake, straddles the Utah/Nevada border. Because of this bi-state location, its groundwater falls under federal regulation (Leshy, 2008). In 2004, the United States Congress passed the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act (LCCRDA). The purpose of the LCCRDA was threefold (Leshy, 2008). First, it allowed Congress to offer SNWA federal funding in order to determine groundwater quality, quantity, flow patterns, and aquifer discharge/recharge rates in each of the hydrological aquifer systems that SNWA wished to pump from. Second, it opened up the way for SNWA to receive right-of-way access on federal lands for the purposes of constructing and operating the infrastructure necessary for the Groundwater Development Project. Third, before SNWA could be allowed to pump water from the bi-state aquifer in Snake Valley, the LCCRDA required Nevada and Utah to reach an agreement, through an interstate compact, regulating the management and allocation of groundwater there.

In 2009, Utah and Nevada came to an official agreement over the groundwater in Snake Valley, which was to go into effect once Utah Governor, Gary Herbert, approved it. However, in 2013, Governor Herbert unexpectedly declined to sign the agreement, saying, he could not do so in “good conscience” (Smart, 2013), thereby removing Snake Valley’s groundwater from the SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project. Herbert’s decision not to approve the interstate compact was hailed by many opponents of SNWA’s pipeline as a victory. One such opponent was the Great Basin Water Network (GBWN), a non-profit volunteer organization formed in 2006 in response to SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project. GBWN is a grassroots political organization committed to

supporting water conservation efforts in rural and urban locales in the Great Basin. Its members consist of ranchers, environmentalists (both rural and urban), and Native American activists (from local Goshute and Shoshone reservations). GBWN has been a leading opponent against SNWA's Groundwater Development Project, and played an instrumental role in petitioning Herbert not to sign the compact.

This was not the first time GBWN had been victorious in their resistance against SNWA's proposed pipeline project. In 2006, the organization filed a lawsuit with the Nevada Supreme Court to allow new residents and descendants of the original petitioners against LVVWD's 1989 plan to file complaints and comments against SNWA's revived rendition of LVVWD's plan. Since the water rights had been first granted in 1989, Nevada state law had ruled that no new complainants could file against SNWA's plan. In other words, the only complaints that would be considered would be those filed in the late 80s and early 90s. Many of the original complainants had since passed on, and there were now new residents in the valleys that would not be allowed to voice their complaints against SNWA's project. In 2010, however, the Nevada Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of GBWN's lawsuit, allowing new complaints to be lodged against SNWA's proposal while simultaneously requiring SNWA to re-file water rights applications with the Nevada State Engineer (www.greatbasinwater.net).

Despite receiving over 23,000 comments objecting to SNWA's new request for water rights, in 2012 the Nevada State Engineer, Jason King, awarded SNWA water rights to 84,000 acre feet of water in the Spring, Cave, Dry Lake, and Delamar valleys. Shortly after the Nevada State Engineer made this decision, opponents (including the GBWN, several Native American Tribes, rural Nevada and Utah counties, and the Latter

Day Saints (LDS Church), filed an appeal in Nevada District Court. Nevada 7th District Court Judge, Robert Estes, ruled in favor of the appeal in December 2013, explaining that the Nevada State Engineer's decision to award such a vast amount of water to SNWA without mandating that monitoring systems be put in place—to ensure SNWA would stop pumping if environmental damage occurred as a result of pumping—was “arbitrary and capricious” (Maffly, 2013). Additionally, in his ruling Judge Estes claimed that the Nevada State Engineer's office did not consider if the awarded water rights to SNWA conflicted with existing water rights (Maffly, 2013). Estes' ruling essentially relegated SNWA's Groundwater Development Project to its pre-1989 status.

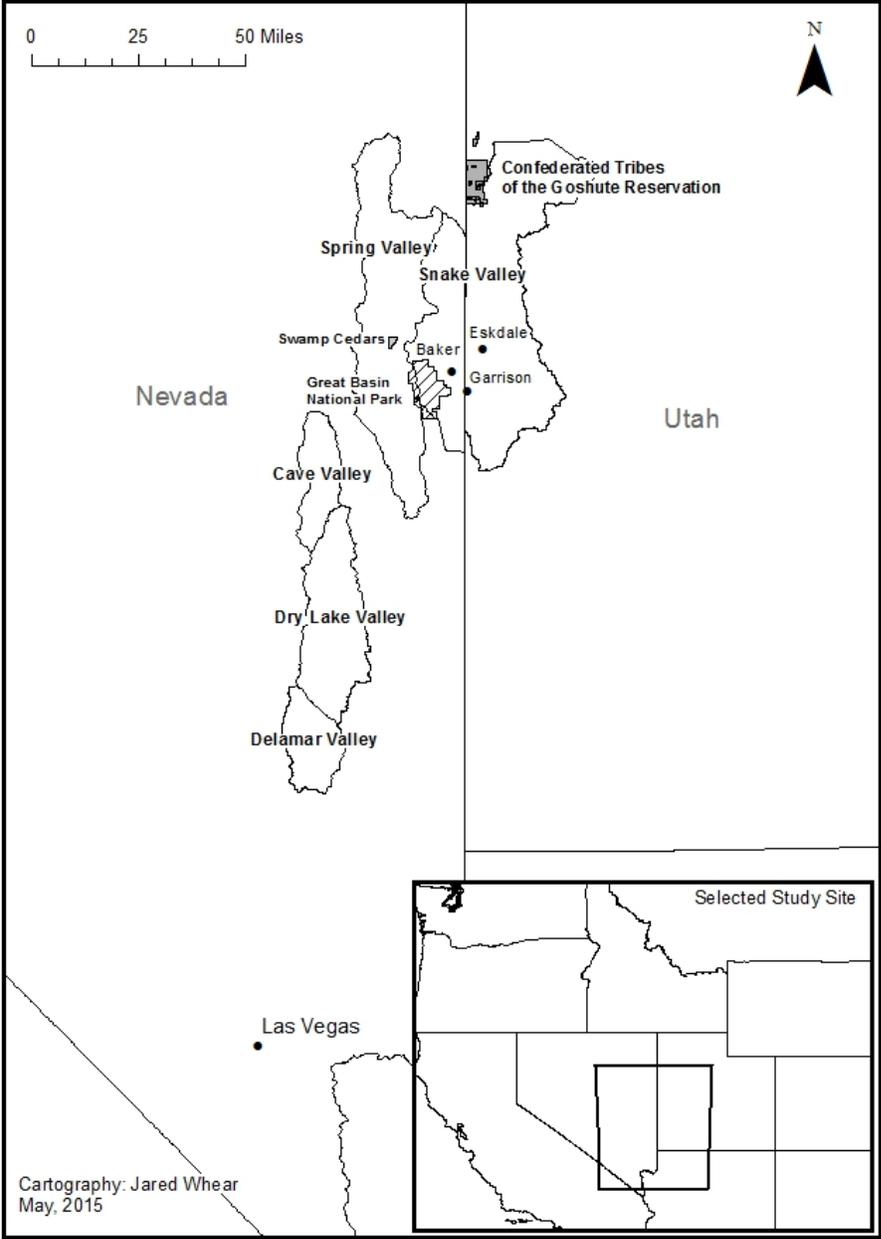
However, because of an agreement SNWA reached with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2013—thanks in part to the LCCRDA of 2004—it still has right-of-way access on federal lands in Spring, Cave, Dry Lake, and Delamar Valleys. In other words, SNWA is able to construct the pipelines and pumps for their project, but they have not appropriated the water rights to fill those pipes—despite having spent millions of dollars purchasing ranches in rural valleys, solely for the purpose of acquiring ranches' senior water rights (Mitchell, 2015). SNWA has not stopped its quest to obtain the water necessary for their project. Shortly after Judge Estes ruled in favor of the GBWN in 2014, SNWA and the Nevada State Engineer's office appealed the decision in the Nevada Supreme Court. In February of 2015, GBWN and its allies claimed another legal victory, albeit not as decisive as the others, when the Nevada Supreme Court said that it does not have the jurisdiction to overturn Judge Estes' appeal, a decision that sent the requested applications back to the Nevada State Engineer's office for further revisions (Ritter, 2015).

The fight against SNWA's Groundwater Development Project continues. In February of 2014, a coalition of several groups of pipeline opponents (including GBWN) filed a motion in United States Federal Court against the BLM for allowing SNWA the right-of-way to install underground pipelines, arguing that the BLM failed to identify all environmental and social impacts when it performed the environmental impact statement granting the SNWA access to the valleys (Ely Times, 2014). The motion still sits in the courts. SNWA and the Nevada State Engineer have expressed no intentions of backing away from the project, showing all signs that they will continue to fight legal challenges against the project. Additionally, with unfettered growth and extreme drought still occurring in the Las Vegas Metro area, it seems unlikely that SNWA—which has already spent millions of dollars on infrastructure and legal fees—has any incentive to stop pursuing its plan for water development.

There are many aspects that make this case worthy of investigation. To begin with, the substantial legal victories that opponents to SNWA's project have experienced are remarkable when one considers the amount of financial and political power SNWA possesses. Arguably, in this regard, the many media sources that have framed this dispute as "David vs. Goliath" are accurate. Second, the amount of diversity within the grassroots coalition, particularly the GBWN—a grassroots organization that has united liberal urbanites with conservative ranchers and Indigenous activists—is worth looking at to uncover how this coalition has managed to maintain unity, despite stakeholder differences. Third, the way this contestation is being framed as a "rural vs. urban" affair is, once again, indicative of the broader "politics of the rural" movement (Woods, 2003), and, as such, there lies a compelling instrumental case study within the bounds of this

topic. Lastly, the resistance against SNWA's proposal has sparked a new conversation on how Las Vegas is currently using its available water and how it can be utilized more efficiently (Cooley et al., 2007). In the next chapter, I explore the academic literature I utilized to uncover how opponents of SNWA's Groundwater Development Project, particularly GBWN, have used preexisting networks to develop a cohesive set of place-frames, which in turn have been monumental in the legal victories acquired by the movement against SNWA.

Figure 1. Map of study sites and valleys* proposed for pumping by Southern Nevada Water Authority for its Groundwater Development Project



*Since Utah declined to sign a bi-state water compact with Nevada in 2013, SNWA is currently not seeking to pump groundwater from the Snake Valley aquifer

Chapter 3: Literature Review: Place, Identity, and Resistance

Place has long been a primary interest in the discipline of geography (Cresswell, 2004). How geographers have conceived of and approached place has changed over time, however. Initially, geographers were concerned with delineating places and showing how they differed from one another (Entrikin, 1991). This approach to place, known as areal differentiation, fell out of fashion as many American universities, such as Harvard University, began purging geography departments from their institutions as geography was seen as not being a scientific discipline (Cresswell, 2012). In response to this, geography took a turn in the direction of positivism, mostly abandoning its concerns with places and how they differed and focusing instead on a conceptualization of abstract space in which laws of location, interaction, and movement could be discovered.

The so-called Quantitative Revolution of the 1950s and 1960s was a time when many geographers were convinced human behavior could be calculated with quantitative formulas and models, thereby rendering qualitative approaches neglected and rarely used (Cresswell, 2012). In critique of the Quantitative Revolution, a group of geographers in the late 1960s led by Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph drew from phenomenology to create what is known as humanistic geography (Cresswell, 2004). At its roots, humanistic geography is concerned with how people perceive and experience place. Humanistic geography made two significant contributions to geography. First, it was through this school of thought that the concept of “sense of place” was popularized. Second, humanistic geography brought place back into the forefront of geographic research (Cresswell, 2004).

As more social scientists and geographers once again started to research place, ideas of how places are made (i.e., “place-making”) began to be considered. Despite the fact that humanistic geography had brought place back into disciplinary focus, there were critiques of how it was being conceptualized. For example, Pred (1984, 279) contends that humanistic geographers viewed place “as an inert, experienced scene” that was “little more than frozen scenes for human activity.” Instead, Pred argues that places are ever changing and fluid configurations of structure and agency articulated over time. Place is therefore always in a process of becoming and never finished. This conceptualization of place is heavily influenced by Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory (1984). At base, structuration theory attempts to find a middle ground between structuralism, which contends that our living patterns and behaviors are the results of overarching structures such as capitalism, and those who think that patterns of living are mostly shaped through human agency and individual choice.

At its very essence, place can be described as geographic space which is made meaningful by people through experience and perception (Tuan, 1977). In addition to being a personal experience, sense of place (and senses of place) can become a collective phenomenon through the practice of daily interactions and lived experiences between local and non-local actors, thus leading to a collective place-based identity (Pred, 1984). On top of these interactive social practices, the formation of places are heavily entwined with political-economic structures and processes (Cresswell, 2004), but for the purposes of this thesis I will be focusing on the social/discursive elements behind place-making. Yung et al. (2003, 856) contends that place “... is created through the use of cultural symbols that bestow and convey meanings that define and frame environmental issues

and biophysical locations. The meanings of a particular place, or place meanings, are conveyed and created through discourse.” Discourse can be described as “a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices through which meaning is given physical and social realities” (Hajer 1995, 44).

The ability for place to be discursively produced and propagated is a testament to its fluidity and, as such, it is as a useful tool in political resistance. Furthermore, since it has been shown that collective identities have the potential to surface as a form of resistance in response to external threats (Larsen, 2004; Williams, 1977), it follows that place-based identities can also materialize as a form of resistance (Keith and Pile, 1997). Considering these political implications, it becomes clear why many social movements and social-movement organizations (SMOs) have used place, and the identities attached to it, as a strategy to further their goals and agendas by uniting stakeholders under the umbrella of place (Escobar, 2001; Larsen, 2008; Martin, 2003; Pierce et al., 2011).

Relational Place-Making

In addition to the discursive construction of place-based identities for the purposes of collective-action, in recent years geographers have begun to explore how networks—and the political processes that shape them—play into the processes of place-making (Bosco, 2001; Pierce et al., 2011). Sociologists have long seen networks as important tools for recruitment in social movement participation (della Porta and Diani, 2006; Snow et al., 1986). According to Bosco (2001), researchers have identified three primary types of networks in collective-action: (1) interpersonal networks, (2) networks

that link individuals and organizations, and (3) inter-organizational networks. Although recent research in geography addresses the importance of networks in place-based collective-action, Pierce et al. (2011, 54) contend that much of this work falls short, stating that the existing literature “inadequately integrates place-making, networking and politics, and only partially captures the inter-relationships between the three.” The authors claim that in order to fully understand the processes that shape place-making, scholars must engage a more holistic approach, which they call “relational place-making.” Almost identical to Pred’s (1984) concept that place is a historically contingent process, Pierce et al. (2011, 59) explain that by using the lens of relational place-making, researchers can gain “insights about place, politics and networks by explicitly recognizing the flexible, multi-scalar and always developing meanings of place: meanings that are produced via socially, politically and economically interconnected interactions among people, institutions and systems.”

However, the relational place-making approach is different from Pred’s place as a historically contingent process, in that it emphasizes the role networks, as opposed to time, play in the place-making process. Because networks are geographically flexible when it comes to scale—networks integrate local, regional, and national scales (Bosco, 2001)—individuals produce and experience place in a multi-scalar (that is to say, networked) manner. It is in this sense that the place-making process is relational: the material realities and subjective experiences of place are produced through networks that enable the mediation of structure and agency over time (cf. Pred 1984). To study place-making, then, is to examine the network relationships and processes involved in the discursive constructions of place, instead of giving a priori analytical emphasis to

structure over agency (or vice versa) or local over nonlocal agents (or vice versa). For this reason, the relational lens of place-making “offers politically oriented network scholars a compatible theoretical tool, one that extends networks by always grounding them in multiple, interconnected, multi-scalar and overlapping places” (Pierce et al., 2011, 58).

In this case study, relational place-making offers an appropriate theoretical approach that reveals how the coalition that formed to fight SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project engaged networks that produced a resistant place identity, represented through a set of “frames.” In the next section, I will discuss how Martin (2003) adapted Snow et al.’s (1986) “collective action frames” to conceptualize what she calls “place-based collective action frames.” These “place- frames,” in turn, are the primary analytical focus for this thesis in the case study of resistance against SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project

Place-Framing

In her study of the discursive production of place in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, Minnesota, Deborah Martin (2003) showed how neighborhood organizations obscured divisive neighborhood realities such as class and ethnicity, and focused instead on the shared lived experience of residential life in Frogtown. Primarily through organizational documents, neighborhood groups codified an idealized version of what Frogtown *ought* to be as part of their effort to crystallize a collective neighborhood identity. Similarly, leaders in a grassroots social movement in British Columbia’s Anahim Lake community discursively constructed a version of place which enabled rural

stakeholders with disparate environmental values and lifestyles to come together in the face of an external threat: the government's timber license to a multinational timber firm whose harvesting practices would lead to the loss of local jobs and increase the potential for environmental degradation in the Anahim Lake area.

In both cases, movement leaders tried to establish collective place-based identities through what Martin has called *place-based collective-action frames* or simply, *place-frames*. Place-frames draw from the concept of *collective-action frames*. Collective-action frames are discourses that foster collective identity and activism by articulating the issues, values, and concerns of a particular movement (Snow et al., 1986). To put it broadly, the process of framing is how individuals filter their perceptions and experiences as a means of making sense of and/or rationalizing events (Shmueli, 2008). Collective-action frames have the potential to become successful once *frame-extension* takes place (Snow et al. 2006). Frame-extension is the process of creating frames that match an individual's concerns and values with those of the broader social movement (della Porta and Diani, 2006).

Movement leaders utilize frames and place-frames by situating and attaching the goals and identity of a movement, to place. As Larsen (2004, 174) explains: "Local activists, in short, appeal to the material and symbolic dimensions of place as a basis for collective identity based-activism." In other words—again, working from the premise that places are discursively constructed—movement leaders are able to negotiate and create meanings of places that appeal to individual senses of place, which are then represented through place-frames.

Because place-frames are discourses, researchers can use coding techniques from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to understand place-making through the qualitative analysis of place-frames (Martin 2003; Larsen 2008; Pierce et al. 2011). Working closely from Snow et al. (1986), Martin has categorized place-frames into three categories: *motivational place frames*, *diagnostic place frames*, and *prognostic place frames* (see Table 1). In *motivational place frames*, discourses address residents as part of a community, point out location-based commonalities, and make calls for activism. In *diagnostic place frames*, problems and causes of problems are identified, and blame is assigned. In *prognostic place frames* actions are identified which will alleviate problems, and resolutions are proposed, and the place is described, as it “ought” to be. (A more in-depth description of how I used place-frames for analysis can be found in the methodology chapter of this thesis.)

Ultimately, these different types of place-frames serve as a strategic way for movement leaders to situate place as the primary commonality in a particular struggle, allowing them to achieve place-frame alignment and thus the potential to advance the goals of a particular social movement. Because I am modeling this research paper on prior case study research (Martin 2003; Larsen 2008; Pierce et al. 2011), I will use these three themes—*motivational place frames*, *diagnostic place frames*, and *prognostic place frames*—to analyze how movement leaders in Snake Valley are framing place as a tool of resistance against the SNWA’s proposal.

The extant research (e.g., Martin, 2003; Larsen, 2008) is theoretically useful but it is not without its critics. Pierce et al. (2011, 56) argue that the existing work tends “...to focus on places as specific localities, which *a priori* draws attention to

people and events within the place, thus obscuring the role of outside connections or activities as forces shaping conditions within a certain locale.” In other words, what Martin and others like Larsen (2008) fail to look at is the important role that nonlocal and extralocal networks play in the place-making/place-framing process. By employing a relational place-making lens in this case study, my goal is to shed light on how networks mediate local and extralocal structures and agencies within the place-framing process at work in collective action. For the next section of this literature review, I situate my analytical focus on relational place-framing within the “politics of the rural,” that provides context for the place-framing activities of those fighting the implementation of the SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project

Politics of the Rural

Rural places in the developed world are changing. Once seen as spaces primarily for agricultural production and raw-material extraction, many rural places have experienced a dramatic restructuring (Woods, 2005). This rural restructuring, which has been fueled by globalization and technological advances, has resulted in a change of rural economies, demographics, and land use patterns (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2004; Larsen, 2004; Woods, 2005). This restructuring has created many problems for rural areas which include, but are not limited to, rural gentrification, high unemployment, and a loss in rural culture and traditions (Cloke and Little, 1997; Woods, 2005). Compounding the problems associated with rural restructuring is the world’s rapidly expanding population, a population which is mostly urban and which is becoming more so every year (World

Health Organization, 2014). In turn, this rapid urbanization is placing a greater demand on rural resources such as water and minerals (Starrs, 1995).

In response to some of these threats, many have argued (Mormont, 1987; Larsen, 2008; Woods, 2003) that a new, albeit loose, rural social movement has formed in postindustrial states, a social movement where the primary unifying factor is to protect, promote, and define a rural way of life. Woods (2003) contends that this emerging rural social movement is defined by “politics of the rural.” Whereas rural protest and conflicts in the past were simply viewed as politics which happened to be located in rural space (i.e. “rural politics”), revolving around singular issues typically related to resource extraction, “politics of the rural” is defined as a movement “where the meaning and regulation of rurality itself is the primary focus of conflict and debate” (Woods, 2003, 312). Furthermore, this emerging movement can be situated in the broader context of “new social movements” (della Porta and Diani, 2006). New social movements can be defined as “a contemporary form of political mobilization that cuts across class divisions and emphasizes non-material motivations, goals and visions among participants...centered on non-material issues, such as human rights, environmental sustainability, and labor equity” (Larsen, 2008, 174).

Another topic that has seen a surge of research in recent years, one closely related to “politics of the rural,” is the commodification of the rural. In this vein of research, rural geographers emphasize how rurality is socially constructed and consumed for the purposes increasing of tourism and real-estate purchases (Woods, 2005). Holloway and Kneafsey (2004) have pointed out three categories that drive the consumption of rurality: the rural idyll, tourism, and the perceived notion that rural spaces serve as a cultural

memorial for traditional values. Of these concepts, the rural idyll is of particular importance as it is a main driver for the other two categories (Woods, 2005).

The rural idyll is the romantic notion that the countryside is a place of peace, tranquility, and traditional values—a notion that embraces the diametrically opposed image that life in the city is hectic, busy, and brash (Cloke and Little, 1997). The rural idyll equates rural living with an escape from modernity (Williams 1973). According to Woods (2005), the rural idyll varies by region and country and is often tied to national identity. It is produced through discourse, and perhaps its greatest producer is Hollywood, whose films have a tendency to portray rural locales that are reminiscent of a quaint and scenic countryside (Woods, 2005). What is more, it serves as a pull factor in amenity migration and counterurbanization, and it acts as a selling point for rural tourism. Often times, rural landscapes are modified to match a perceived rural idyll. Very rarely does the rural idyll consider the already existing realities of rural space, a space that is full of diverse social groups and economic disparity.

Like much of the research that has been done on the politics and commodification of rural places, the research in this thesis shows the resistance movement in opposition to SNWA's Groundwater Development Project has created a version (or versions) of rurality through place-frames that seek alignment with the rural idyll. This frame alignment presents Snake Valley and surrounding valleys as places of tranquility and traditional values. However, in this case, what is most noteworthy about this portrayal is the purpose for which the rural idyll is being used, and the unique ways in which it is being constructed. Whereas much of the research regarding the commodification of the rural shows that the rural idyll is created and used to drive tourism and real-estate, in the

case of this social movement, constructions of rural idyll have been framed to simultaneously bridge rural and urban interests by utilizing the image of the “ecological rancher”; a frame that marries production and consumption landscapes by portraying ranching activities in Snake Valley as being beneficial to both wildlife and to maintaining traditional rural livelihoods—findings which are discussed further in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The case study approach was selected for this thesis because it offers a holistic method to examine the political, cultural, and social aspects of this movement, while situating it in a geographical and temporal context (Yin, 2003). Specifically, I have elected to use the *instrumental* case study approach, as the findings gleaned from this research derive from and advance theories of place-making in collective action framing (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, as my data sources are qualitative, the case study approach is well suited for this thesis as it offers an appropriate avenue to explore the many variables in this case, such as the role of individual actors, decision-making processes, and other important facets essential for examining how the Great Basin Water Network (GBWN) has resisted the Southern Water Nevada Authority's (SNWA) Groundwater Development Project, through the use of collective action frames and place-frames.

This thesis contends that place is created and dispersed through the use of cultural symbols that give meaning to the biophysical/environmental attributes of certain locales represented through discourse (Yung, 2003). Discourse can be defined as textual and non-textual forms of representation that convey specific ideas or concepts, which are then produced, reproduced, giving meaning to physical and social realities (Hajer, 1995). Because of this, in order to examine how place has been constructed and framed by GBWN, I elected to engage in discourse analysis via a systematic/grounded and axial coding of content produced by GBWN.

Data Sources

Data collected for this thesis were acquired through three primary sources: 15 semi-structured interviews, GBWN documents and media, and ethnographic participant observation. The 15 interviews were conducted with GBWN board members or active non-board member participants using a semi-structured interview format. Interviewees were found using a snowball sampling technique. My interview participants consisted of 7 women and 8 men. Though I attempted to stratify the interview sample to achieve balanced representation from the main interest groups comprising the GBWN—i.e., urban environmentalists, rural ranchers, and local American Indian tribes—in the end, I am afraid these efforts fell short. My sample consisted of 3 urban environmentalists, 10 rural activists, and only 2 Indigenous interviewees affiliated with the Ely Shoshone Tribe.

Clearly, this sample fails to lend a fair representation to the Indigenous and urban interests in this movement. I am particularly conscious of the problems associated with the small sample size of Indigenous interviewees, considering the marginalization Indigenous people as a whole have experienced in regards to natural resources management. However, after several attempts to reach out to the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute (the tribe resisting the pipeline project most actively), I was unable to arrange any face-to-face interviews with tribal members. I was, however, present during the “Sacred Water Tour” and engaged in a set of informal conversations with several members of the Goshute Tribe regarding the resistance to water development project. If I move forward with this topic in the future, I will continue trying to engage in dialogue with the Goshute tribe, as well as other tribes involved in resisting the pipeline project.

In order to determine the role that the construction of place has played in facilitating collective action in this movement, and to gain more information regarding the historical/legal background of GBWN's role in challenging SNWA's project, the interview questions I asked participants included the following: (1) In light of recent court rulings, where do SNWA's plans stand now? (2) What makes Snake Valley and the surrounding communities important and worth fighting for? (3) What would you like outsiders to know about the places that could potentially be impacted by SNWA's project? (4) What is it like to live the rural valleys SNWA wants to pump groundwater from? (5) How has the protest changed relationships in these communities? and (6) What does the future look like for SNWA's pipeline project? The interviews were transcribed from recordings made during the interview process.

The second data source is in the form of documents and other materials that GBWN (or affiliated members) produced in efforts to resist SNWA's pipeline project. These documents/materials, which I shall refer to throughout this thesis, include the following items: (1) editions of the biannual organizational newsletter, *Water Gab*, (2) a film released by the organization in late 2013 entitled, "The Consequences...Transporting Snake Valley Water to Satisfy a Thirsty Las Vegas," (3) content on the Great Basin Water Network's Website (from April of 2014), (4) a newsletter entitled "Water Grab EIS Guide," which assisted activists in protesting BLM's granting of right-of-way access to federal public lands to SNWA, (5) the content of a "Ranching Exhibit" loosely affiliated with GBWN, located near the Great Basin National Park in Baker, NV, and (6) various protest signs aimed at preventing SNWA's project to go into effect.

Finally, the last source of data I used to generate the findings in this thesis were a number of field notes I composed shortly after two events where I participated in ethnographic participant observations at (1) a “Sacred Water Tour”—a three day exploration of the valleys in eastern Nevada SNWA wishes to pump groundwater from—hosted in late May of 2014 by the radical environmental organization Deep Green Resistance, with an Indigenous board member of GBWN serving as the tour-guide, and (2) the 2014 Snake Valley Festival (June-20-22), an annual three day festival/parade/fundraiser held in Baker, NV, put on in efforts to help defray legal costs for GBWN.

Study Area and the Adverse Effects of SNWA’s Pipeline Project

I conducted the interviews and participant observation in Snake Valley, where I stayed over a period of four weeks between late May to late June of 2014. Snake Valley straddles the Utah/Nevada border approximately 300 miles north of Las Vegas, Nevada (see Figure 1). One reason Snake Valley has become the center of this movement is because of its status as the most populated valley which would be affected by the SNWA pipeline project. The population of Snake Valley is roughly 750 people, with many of its residents engaging in ranching and other forms of agriculture. Snake Valley is approximately 90 miles long north to south, and 30 miles wide east to west. Aside from the fact that Snake Valley sits in two states, it is unique because of the diversity of the communities that are situated in the valley. The largest community, Baker, NV has a population of about 75 people. This population includes a communal new-age community called “The School of the Natural Order.” Its members have been active in resisting

SNWA's pipeline project. Because the Great Basin National Park is located in the nearby Snake Range, the population of Baker rises to about 150 people during the summer when seasonal employees are living there, in addition to the many tourists who visit this park during the summer months.

Some of the other communities in Snake Valley include Garrison, UT, a Mormon settlement established in 1870, and Eskdale, UT, a religious community settled in 1957 by a sect of messianic Christians, also committed to communal living. All three of these communities have been actively resisting SNWA's pipeline project, with the Border Inn, a hotel/casino/bar that sits directly on the Nevada/Utah state line, serving as the mutual meeting place for these communities because of its central location in the valley. Snake Valley is unique in that it is one of the most remote places in the lower 48. Power grid electricity did not arrive to the valley until the late 1950s. Cellular phone service in Snake Valley was only established in the spring of 2014, right before I arrived in late May to conduct my research.

Although very few people live in the other Nevada valleys SNWA wants to pump (Spring, Dry Lake, Cave, and Delamar Valleys), there is still fierce resistance to the pipeline project being implemented in these places. To begin with, hydrologists have shown that the aquifers situated beneath each of the valley floors are carbonate-rock aquifers, which means they are all interconnected; thus, if you pump groundwater from one valley, over time you will also be drawing down the groundwater from adjacent valleys (Herskovits, 2011). The other reason why people are against pumping groundwater from these valleys is because in SNWA's calculations of how much unappropriated water is "available" for their project in these rural valleys, they included the

water that is currently being used by phreatophyte plants (plants whose long root systems allow them to survive in dry areas by relying on groundwater), such as greasewood, as being un-appropriated and thus available (Deacon et al., 2007). In other words, if SNWA is given the rights to pump groundwater from these valleys, a mass vegetation die-off will occur. This will result in a decrease in air quality, as loose soil will be blown into nearby valleys and urban metro areas, as one of the interviewees concisely put it: “SNWA wants to create a dustbowl on purpose”

This mass vegetation die-off will also occur to other non-phreatophytic plants. For example, there is a stand of Rocky Mountain Juniper trees located on the valley floor of Spring Valley, Nevada (see Figure 1). Known as the Swamp Cedars, this site is considered sacred to the local Goshute and Shoshone people of the region (Dark, 2012). For centuries, the ancestors of these people used the site as a gathering point to an engage in marriage ceremonies, trading, and other forms of cultural activities (Lahren, 2010). However, circa 1860, it is estimated that the US Calvary massacred over 350 men, women, and children as retaliation for Indian attacks on Pony Express carriers in the area (Lahren, 2010). It is estimated white settlers in the region killed an additional 30 or so people in another massacre of Shoshone and Goshute people at Swamp Cedars in 1897 (Lahren, 2010). Today, in part because of the atrocities that have occurred at the Swamp Cedars, the Goshute and Shoshone people consider this place to be their most sacred ancestral land (presently Swamp Cedars is located on public BLM land), as they believe their ancestors’ souls are embodied in the trees at Swamp Cedars (Dark, 2012). It has been shown that the eventual drawdown of the groundwater table in Spring Valley that would occur from SNWA’s pipeline project could potentially kill off the Rocky

Mountain Juniper trees at Swamp Cedars, as they too rely on groundwater for their source of water (www.blm.gov).

The last reason why activists and stakeholders are challenging SNWA's Groundwater Development Project is the effect it would have on the region's local biodiversity. This biodiversity consists of 20 species of animals on the federal endangered species list and 137 endemic water species (Deacon et al., 2007)—not to mention the region's aforementioned phreatophytic plant communities—all of which depend on the Great Basin's seeps, springs, and aquifers for their existence. In a region that receives very limited precipitation, and which climate change is expected to reduce further, precious groundwater is absolutely necessary to sustain life in the Great Basin. All of the consequences likely to occur as the result of SNWA's proposed Groundwater Development Project, make a compelling case for those aimed at resisting its implementation.

Discourse/Content Analysis and the Systematic Coding Process

In order to uncover GBWN place-framing activity and other collective action framing activity, I first performed a discourse analysis on the GBWN documents and materials listed previously in this chapter. This qualitative analysis on textual and non-textual data (such as the GBWN photos I analyzed presented in their film and website) was facilitated through a grounded and axial coding system (Glazer and Strauss, 1967). To help facilitate the grounded theory portion of the discourse analysis, I utilized a set of systematic codes first put forth by Martin (2003), which, in turn, were developed from concepts first proposed in the work of Snow et al. (1992). These systematic codes, or

place-frame codes (discussed in more length in the literature review chapter of this thesis) provided me with three primary themes—motivational, prognostic, and diagnostic place-frames (see Table 1) to use as a blueprint to develop a set of sub-themes or sub-frames under. Although some of GBWN’s place-frames and collective action frames could arguably be classified under more than one theme, the coding exercise provided a solid foundation for examining how place is constructed within GBWN collective action frames, which in turn have helped motivate and support the formation of a broad coalition of diverse stakeholders against SNWA pipeline project.

Next, I analyzed the transcripts of interviews with key informants from GBWN, and the information I obtained from ethnographic participant observation, and compared them with the data I gleaned from the discourse analysis in an effort to engage in what Johnston (2002) calls “frame verification.” Serving as a means of triangulation, frame verification ensures that the frames elicited from individual interviews accord with those presented to the public through organizational media and documents. During the frame verification process, I discovered several instances where textual discourse displayed in GBWN documents matched almost verbatim with information gleaned from key-informant interviews. This suggests that frame creation by GBWN was a calculated and concerted effort by a handful of movement leaders. Furthermore, the frame verification process allowed me to identify which interview segments were worthy to be applied towards frame analysis.

Table 1. Types of <i>place-frames</i>	Motivational place-frames	Diagnostic place-frames	Prognostic place-frames
Purpose	Addresses residents as part of a community; point out location based commonalties; calls for activism	Identifies problems; point out causes of problems; assigns blame	Identifies actions to take; addresses resolutions to problems; idealizes how a place “should” be
Examples (From GBWN Website)	<i>“The Great Basin Water Network was formed to protect the water resources of the Great Basin for current and future residents—human, animal and plant. Organizations, businesses, and individuals have banded together to form the Network so that decisions on all water development proposals in the Great Basin are made in the open with caution.”</i>	<i>“The proposed pumping scheme would bring two hundred or more wells with power lines, roads, and linked buried pipelines to cover the valleys...Ranchers throughout the Snake Valley believe that water they depend on for their agricultural livelihoods will ‘dry-up’ if the project is approved.”</i>	<i>“Communication, dialogue, common sense groundwater reforms, urban and agricultural conservation measures and pure old fashioned political pressure are what is needed.”</i>

At the end of the coding and analysis process, the themes and sub-frames that were procured and developed reveal that GBWN has created various constructions of place to encourage a wide array of supporters to join them in their efforts to defeat SNWA’s pipeline project. Furthermore, conflicting and contradictory messages often are laden within several place-frames. For example, in several place-frames GBWN tries to appeal to urban Las Vegas residents to join them in their opposition to the pipeline project (e.g., by framing the pipeline project as being too expensive for Las Vegas residents) while in other frames, GBWN admonishes Las Vegas residents and city

planners as being out of touch with reality, as is exemplified by their profligate water use and their influx of expansive and unrestricted urban sprawl. The internal contradictions of these and other frames will be discussed in more detail in the results and discussion chapter on place-frames.

Last, one of the purposes of this thesis is to expand upon place-framing (Martin, 2003) and relational place-making (Pierce et al., 2011) by illustrating that constructions of place rely on the existence of networks that are multi-scalar and relational in nature, involving the interplay of multiple places and multiple people. To do this, I once again draw from the data procured during the 15 semi-structured interviews illustrating the successes that this group has experienced have been assisted by a preexisting network first formed in the early 1980s in resistance to the MX Missile Project, which later resurfaces in response to the threat from SNWA. Drawing primarily from interview data, I show that another reason why this group has been successful against the pipeline project is because of their effective legal/political strategy, which simultaneously attacked the pipeline project at many different levels of court, from the local to the federal level, whilst engaging in political alliance building with many different political actors. These political actors ranged from the city and county government scales (both rural and urban), to officials at the state level—all within the context and dynamics of two state governments—because of Snake Valley’s position on the Nevada/Utah line. These findings are explained at more length in the results and discussion chapter on relational place-framing.

Chapter 5: Great Basin Water Network Place-Frames

In this chapter I present and discuss the way members of the Great Basin Water Network (GBWN) are involved in the discursive construction of place for the purposes of uniting a diverse set of stakeholders in protest against Southern Nevada Water Authority's (SNWA) Groundwater Development Project, with the goal of defeating the pipeline project. Because of its status as the most populated valley under threat from the impacts of SNWA's proposed pipeline project, Snake Valley, which sits on the Utah/Nevada border, is the place that is most prominently represented and portrayed in place-frames created by the GBWN. However, GBWN place-frames represent the Great Basin and other rural eastern Nevada valleys generally—and for reasons that are discussed further in this chapter—Las Vegas has been prominently featured in several GBWN place-frames.

Broadly, my findings show that in order to appeal to rural agriculturalists and urban-based environmentalists, GBWN created and circulated several loosely related, and in some cases contradictory, place-frames and collective action frames, which portray Snake Valley and surrounding valleys as landscapes of production and consumption tended by an “ecological rancher” who supports the sustainable use of the land. At the same time, GBWN created a set of collective action frames that attempted to appeal to Las Vegas residents by arguing that the pipeline project is too expensive for Las Vegas taxpayers and that the increased sprawl resulting from the project would be bad for quality of life there, while simultaneously placing blame on the arid desert city for their seemingly insatiable appetite for water. GBWN claims that Las Vegas' demand for water

is spurred by the alleged close relationships between SNWA, political leaders, and developers interested in gaining access to more water for the purposes of constructing new development projects in the driest city in the United States. Furthermore, GBWN constructed a set of place-frames that show how Las Vegas “ought” to be—a more sustainable city: a city whose growth should not exceed its water availability (see Table 2).

Coding Motivational, Diagnostic, and Prognostic Place-Frames

As I discuss at more length in the methodology, in order to uncover GBWN place-framing activity, I analyzed a selection of GBWN media and documents. Second, I analyzed transcripts of interviews I conducted in the summer of 2014 with key informants from GBWN, to ensure that the frames elicited from individual interviews accord with those presented to the public through organizational media and documents.

Throughout the analysis I used a grounded-theory approach to apply a systematic coding scheme that was put forth by Martin (2003) which, in turn, was developed from concepts first proposed in the work of Snow et al. (1986). This systematic coding scheme provided me with three primary themes—motivational, prognostic, and diagnostic place-frames (see Table 1)—to use as a blueprint to develop a set of sub-themes. Although some of the GBWN’s place-frames/discourses could arguably be classified under more than one theme, the coding exercise provided a solid foundation for examining how place is constructed within GBWN collective action, supporting a coalition of diverse stakeholders who have experienced success in both the grassroots and legal arenas. In the following sections, I provide evidence of the place-frames GBWN created and utilized,

and discuss their broader significance, including the implications for rural identity, coalition building, and rural and urban water usage.

Motivational Place-Frames

Motivational place-frames are discourses that address residents as part of a community and point out location based commonalities (Martin, 2003). I identified several motivational place-frames represented in GBWN media and interview data that were created in an effort to initiate place-based activism by appealing to a diverse group of stakeholder's individual senses of place and identity. The four place-frames/collective action frames that I developed fitting under the motivational place-frames theme include: (1) the "rural way of life" frame, (2) the "place of wonder and beauty" frame, (3) the "ecological rancher" frame and, (4) the "harmful for Las Vegas" frame. While the first three motivational frames appeal mostly to rural community members and environmentally concerned urban stakeholders, the "harmful for Las Vegas" frame focuses on the negative effects that SNWA's project would have on Las Vegas residents, as I will discuss in the following sections.

"A Rural Way of Life"

One of the most prominent motivational place-frames represented in GBWN discourse and media is a landscape of production frame that depicts a distinctive rural way of life, called the "rural way of life" frame. In this place-frame, movement leaders frame Snake Valley (and surrounding valleys) as place of agricultural productivity, "traditional" rural values (such as family and community), and long-term planning—all

attributes that are made possible in the Great Basin Desert because of the availability of scarce water, as these frames illustrate. The discourse invoked by this set of place-frames is situated within what Woods (2003) calls “politics of the rural,” where social movements occurring in rural spaces are motivated, in part, by defending a “rural way of life.”

One example of this set of motivational place-frames is evident in a film produced and released in 2013 by the GBWN entitled: “The Consequences...Transporting Snake Valley Water to Satisfy a Thirsty Las Vegas.” In the film, still-framed images of Snake Valley, mostly of the Baker family ranches (one of the leading families leading the fight against SNWA), show agricultural landscapes, while a narrator discusses how Snake Valley is a productive place of agriculture because of irrigation made possible through groundwater and the families that have worked the land there for over a century. Occasionally, the voice of Dean Baker, a long time rancher in Snake Valley and a movement leader who has come to represent the human face of the rural interests against SNWA, talks about how in his lifetime he has witnessed springs in Snake Valley dry up from farming and ranching. All the while, the video also emphasizes what a unique place Snake Valley is environmentally, and how wildlife has come to depend upon the irrigated crops of Snake Valley for habitat—a topic that I shall discuss further in the section on “the ecological rancher” frame.

One of the purposes of the film is to show that this “traditional” agricultural way of life is threatened. In one scene, while several images of one of Dean Baker’s ranches are shown, the main narrator states: “Families continue growing crops and working cattle much as the Bakers have for nearly eight decades, but now their environment, their ranch,

their rural lifestyle, and that of their neighbors who make their living here on the land in Snake Valley on the Utah border, have been threatened as never before.” The narrator then goes on to discuss the impacts SNWA’s pipeline project would have on the area.

Another example of the “rural way of life” place-frame is on display on the outskirts of Great Basin National Park in a “ranching exhibit” that was funded in part by prominent ranching members of the GBWN. Found in the foothills of the Snake Range and overlooking the pivot irrigation fields of Snake Valley, the exhibit has three signs underneath a terrace. The first sign describes how ranchers have been “Living with the Land” since the 1800s in the Great Basin, by learning the “lessons” of life in such an arid place, stating: “These lessons gave the rancher a deeper understanding of the utilization of renewable resources. In the valley below and throughout the Great Basin ranchers, as stewards of the land, produced a sustained yield of wool, lamb, and beef. Their long-term commitment to the land and their communities has made the livestock industry a cornerstone of the Great Basin Economy.” Displayed on the next sign, the main headline reads “Ranching Today,” and discusses how ranching in the Great Basin in present times is just as challenging as ever. At the bottom of this sign, there’s a quote from Dean Baker: “It’s a way of life. Ranchers have the inherent need and want to make things grow.”

Finally, on the last sign, the headline reads: “Water A Matter of Survival” and beneath it states: “...Today’s ranchers depend on water...Water is essential for good crops and healthy livestock. As thirsty urban populations grow, so does the region’s need for water. Ranching communities could once depend on exclusive access to their local area water. But with the possibility of the region’s water resources being reallocated,

future access is uncertain. Water will continue to be a vital factor for agricultural survival in the Great Basin.” Altogether, this ranching exhibit epitomizes the “rural way of life” place-frame by showing that Snake Valley and other arid places in the Great Basin have been able to support agriculture, which in turn supports rural communities, families, and traditional rural values. Furthermore, this place-frame establishes that all of these qualities have been made primarily possible by one thing: water—a resource that is at risk of being lost for the short-term benefit of urban communities.

“A Place of Wonder and Beauty”

Another important and widely used motivational place-frame that is prevalent throughout GBWN materials is the landscape of consumption place-frame that I call the “place of wonder and beauty” frame. In this place-frame, GBWN paints Snake Valley as place of unique environmental wonder and beauty. Yet, in this same place-frame, GBWN emphasizes the fragility of this environmentally significant place, a fragileness that is present because of the little amount of water available in the area. By showing the unique environmental characteristics of the valleys that rely on the groundwater that SNWA is eyeing to take, the purpose of this place-frame is to motivate and unite stakeholders that are interested in preserving the area for its environmental qualities.

Through the course of interview analysis, many of the key informants who expressed Snake Valley as being a “place of wonder and beauty” were those who resided in nearby urban areas, either in Las Vegas, Reno, or Salt Lake City. Which is no surprise, when considering that this landscape of consumption place-frame is very reliant on and reminiscent of the *rural idyll*. Again, as is discussed at more length in the literature

review (Chapter 2), the *rural idyll* is the fabricated notion that perceives rural places as landscapes of tranquility, environmental beauty, and traditional values (Clope and Little, 1997). Furthermore, it is usually constructed and perpetuated by urbanites looking to commodify rural places, either for the purposes of selling second-homes to urban populations, or for marketing rural places as spaces of recreation.

In this case, the GBWN frames invoke the *rural idyll* discourse to portray the area as a landscape of consumption, to assist them in framing Snake Valley and the surrounding valleys as a viable place of recreation worthy of preservation because of environmental uniqueness, all of which is jeopardized by SNWA's plan. A good example of how leaders in GBWN have framed Snake Valley as a "place of wonder and beauty" can be seen in this quote from an interview with an ecologist and active GBWN member who lives in Las Vegas:

Then if you go to Great Basin National Park you have Mt. Wheeler, the second highest peak in Nevada. You have bristlecone pine forests, you have glaciers, you have alpine areas; you have a refuge from the heat of the Great Basin Desert. You know, you have eco-systems, again that have been isolated since the last ice age, so you have plants, and you have invertebrates, and you have butterflies that are found nowhere else in the world...So, you know, there's a lot to enjoy in Snake Valley and the surrounding areas that make it unique and different. And the uniqueness there stems from the springs that bead off of the mountain themselves. There are a number of springs that are located at the base of the mountain range that constitutes the Great Basin National Park and those springs flow down through lush wet meadows where cows are allowed to graze at times of the year, and it creates a scenery, it creates a pastoral setting due to the abundance of water and so the big question with Snake Valley is, okay, if SNWA comes in here and they want to tap around 30,000 acre feet a year, what's that going to do to this pastoral setting, to the eco system? Again, not only are the brush lands going to go away, but those wet meadows and those riparian flows, and those springs themselves are going to dry up and be gone. It's going to look radically different.

This quote expresses Snake Valley as environmentally spectacular and worthy of “enjoyment.” But this quote is also significant in that it touches on another theme frequently found in the “place of wonder and beauty” frame: the fact that the Great Basin National Park is located in the area that SNWA wishes to pump from. In the mid-1980s when the Snake Range was first being considered for the location of the Great Basin National Park, it was widely opposed by many members in the rural ranching communities of Snake Valley. However, within the “place of wonder and beauty” frame some of the very community members who once protested the park are now using it as a tool to fight SNWA’s proposal, as one rural Snake Valley business-owner and member of the GBWN member said:

The thing that I find irritating when I talk to the Southern Nevada Water Authority, is that they talk like there’s nothing up here, like there’s no value up here, but there is, and a lot of the people from Las Vegas are coming up here; they’re coming up to the park, they’re coming up for hunting or fishing and if they come up here with that project, you know, I seriously doubt if our business could stay in business.

Another example of the “place of wonder and beauty” frame is found on the GBWN website (www.greatbasinwater.net). In several photographs on the site, we see wildlife (birds and elk) surrounded by a scenic high desert landscape of sagebrush and greasewood. In another photo, we see a group of birdwatchers concentrating through binoculars, enjoying recreational opportunities in Snake Valley. Additionally, the “place of wonder and beauty” frame is present throughout the *Water Gab* newsletters, and the GBWN film, “The Consequences...Transporting Snake Valley Water to Satisfy a Thirsty Las Vegas.” At one moment in the film, while the still-frame image on the screen is of a

wetland area in Snake Valley, the narrator says: “Interestingly it's also the home of a frog that was listed under the endangered species act: the Columbia spotted frog. This presents a problem for SNWA; if the springs dry up, the frog living in the springs will be gone. They know they can't be drying up springs with threatened species. They'll need to have other places that they can put our frog here if the spring dries up.” This was not the first time the Columbia spotted frog was used as a symbol of the environmental importance and fragility of Snake Valley. In a photo found in a copy of the *Water Gab* newsletter, there is picture of a t-shirt, and on the t-shirt there is a cartoon frog with a big smile on its face. Above this image it reads: “Without water we’ll croak!” And below the image, it reads: “Protect Snake Valley.”

Clearly, this landscape of consumption place-frame evokes some strong environmental discourses and images, partly for the purposes of motivating those concerned about saving the environmental integrity of Snake Valley from the potential negative effects of SNWA’s pipeline project. But no matter how successfully this frame has been executed through the GBWN, it does raise some important questions. For instance, how are the contradictions between framing Snake Valley as landscape of production reconciled with frames depicting it as a landscape of consumption?

The answer to this question is important, as the film produced by GBWN admits: the springs and wetlands in Snake Valley have been drying up as a result from decades of irrigating crops. The film, however, does not mention if the springs drying up from agriculture have adversely affected species like the Columbia spotted frog, and other environmental aspects of the valley, but it is typical in the American West for landscapes of production and landscapes of consumption to be in conflict, in part, because they

demand different uses for resources such as water. And, so, in order to reconcile contradictions between the “rural way of life” frame and the “place of wonder and beauty” frame the GBWN has created and utilized what I have labeled the “ecological rancher” frame.

“The Ecological-Rancher”

In this frame the rural interests discussed in the “rural way of life” frame and the more urban-centered environmental concerns presented in the “place of wonder and beauty” frame, are brought together by illustrating that ranching and farming activities taking place in Snake Valley are beneficial for wildlife there. The “rural way of life” frame raises a key question—*Is farming and ranching in the desert a good use of scarce water?* As one rural resident admitted:

You look down there in the valley, with the green alfalfa growing and everything. Las Vegas will tell you, ‘that’s not the best place in the world to grow alfalfa.’ Well maybe its not the best place in the world, but it is for people who have started their lives here many, many, years ago, who raise alfalfa crops and other crops, cows, sheep, and they are living up here and establish themselves and this is their lifestyle.

The *ecological rancher* frame attempts to manage the contradiction in a landscape where agricultural water use potentially threatens its own endemic biodiversity, for example the effect of irrigation water-intensive crops like alfalfa (Gonzales, 2015) has on the Columbia spotted frog.

Turning back to GBWN’s 2013 film “The Consequences...Transporting Snake Valley Water to Satisfy a Thirsty Las Vegas” we see a film constructed through the

“ecological rancher frame.” In several still images throughout the film, deer, birds, and other wildlife are shown using the acres of green crops on the Baker Ranches. For example, in one scene, the narrator explains a photo of a beautiful alfalfa crop being shown to the viewer: “This picture was taken out of the window at one of the Bakers’ houses. You can see six bucks. You can see the cows behind them and the fields where the crops are produced.” And then, as the film changes scenes to another image of a crop in Snake Valley, the narrator goes on to state: “Of course there are birds as well. Here’s a shot of geese and sand hill cranes. The Baker ranch provides a home to many of them. Snake Valley Ranches are obviously a home for wildlife.”

The “ecological rancher” frame is also evident in some of my interviews with key informants. In one interview, a local rancher in Snake Valley answered my questions while he and I drove around Snake Valley in his pickup truck to check on different sections of his crops. At one point in the interview he talks about how his crops serve as a “zone of life,” by comparing them to wetlands:

It’s basically a wetland, and we make it a bigger wetland by irrigating it. And so you have all the insects and the deer that come. The deer migrate 10 miles east, so you got this wetland, that you make, and wildlife and things basically expand out from there...and it basically creates a zone of life.

And later in the interview, while conceding his farms are not quite the same as a spring, he elaborated:

[That], any field we do, is full of insects that attract birds. You know, it’s not entirely the same as a spring in a wetland, but it’s awfully close, and it supports huge amounts of wildlife.

Clearly, within the ecological rancher frame, the water that is used to grow crops in Snake Valley is beneficial not just for maintaining crops and the “rural way of life” they support, but to the wildlife that lives there, thereby serving as an implicit justification for irrigating crops in a desert. Furthermore, it simultaneously acts as a bridge to connect the environmental and agricultural interests of the diverse group of stakeholders that make up the Great Basin Water Network, by linking the “rural way of life” frame with the “place of wonder and beauty” frame. However, it does not completely resolve the contradiction in that it fails to acknowledge some of the effects associated with irrigation such as lowering the water table, which has resulted in dried-up springs throughout Snake Valley and as even the film admits is occurring.

Aside from these motivational place-frames serving as means of identity formation and coalition building, they also illustrate that the water that is in Snake Valley (and surrounding valleys) obviously belongs there as it is clearly in use—either by ranchers, wildlife, or by both, simultaneously, as in the “ecological rancher” frame. This comes as no surprise, as the primary water law of the American West, the law of prior appropriation, requires senior water rights holders, to show beneficial use of water, or else they could be at risk of losing their water rights. This is frequently referred to as the “use it, or lose it” paradox. But whereas these frames serve to assist coalition building centered around activism pertaining to Snake Valley, another set of motivational place-frames were found in GBWN discourse; place-frames that were used to motivate Las Vegas residents to oppose SNWA’s plan.

“It’s Harmful for Las Vegas”

In this framing, the GBWN presents SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project as being bad for people in Las Vegas for two reasons: (1) the cost of the project is so great (estimated at \$15.7 billion dollars) that it will overburden ratepayers in Las Vegas, and (2) the increased amount of development that the project facilitates in Las Vegas will result in a lower quality of life for urban residents by contributing to sprawl.

The economically burdensome argument is far more prevalent in GBWN documents and discourse than the argument concerning sprawl. In fact, the only public reference to SNWA’s project reducing quality of life for Las Vegas residents was found on the GBWN’s website in April of 2014, when I conducted my original document analysis of the website. On the website a headline reads: “What are the threats from water grabs to fuel explosive, urban growth?” and below this headline it states: “Hurting residents of cities by lowering quality of life with increasing congestion, traffic, pollution and escalating infrastructure costs resulting from unbridled growth.” In early 2015, however, the GBWN updated their website and this element of the frame was removed.

The argument that SNWA’s pipeline project is far too expensive to be implemented is one that is frequently invoked by GBWN. A prime example of this discourse can be seen in many of the protest signs and slogans present on the ground in Snake Valley. In June of 2014, when I attended the Snake Valley Festival in Baker, Nevada—the tiny town that is the center of activism for this movement—a small parade took place, where various pick-up trucks, tractors, and trailers were displaying many protest signs. On one of the trailers being pulled by a pickup truck, an enormous bucket (representing a water pail) had a large sign on the outside of the bucket, which read:

“SNWA Pipeline=\$15+Billion: WATER GRAB WILL BLEED LAS VEGAS RATEPAYERS & EASTERN NEVADA DRY,” while a prominent member of the movement, who was running for White Pine county political office at the time, stood in the bucket, waving to the audience. This sign epitomizes the “harmful for Las Vegas” frame. Not only will SNWA’s plan be bad for rural eastern Nevada, but it will also be bad for Las Vegas. Interestingly, the bucket/sign it is on display all year in Baker, Nevada for visitors to the Great Basin National Park to see, many of which who come to the park from Las Vegas.

Additionally, the discourses representative of this frame were present in many key-informant interviews and in the film released by GBWN. In some instances, this frame is intensified by claiming that SNWA’s project will be *worse* for Las Vegas than it will be for Snake Valley. As one Snake Valley rancher put it:

If they go ahead and push the project through, I think it’s going to be worse for Las Vegas than it is for the people up here. Because they’ll be on the hook for the bill, the cost of the project, the environmental damage that it’ll have caused, and on top of that, there isn’t the water resources here that they think that there is.

Again, this sentiment is echoed in the film produced by GBWN, when Dean Baker states: "When I talk about this subject, I don't try to talk about those of us in eastern Nevada being against Las Vegas: this pipeline will hurt Las Vegas more than it will hurt us." The film’s narrator goes on to explain the cost of the project that Las Vegas residents would be responsible for paying, through in increase in water usage rates. Both of these quotes raise interesting questions. For example, *how could SNWA’s pipeline project possibly be worse for residents of Las Vegas than those living in Snake Valley whose livelihoods are*

at stake? Clearly, SNWA's proposed project would be more harmful to rural residents who would be directly affected by the plan.

However, the purpose of the "harmful for Las Vegas" frame is not necessarily to show that the pipeline project will be worse for Las Vegas. The purpose of this frame is to get Las Vegas residents to oppose the pipeline project by making it seem economically unfeasible. It does this by ignoring the potentially disastrous effects that would occur in rural places from SNWA's plan. The unique element of this frame is that it bridges the rural-urban divide by downplaying the rural places where environmental degradation would occur (e.g. Snake Valley) while accentuating the project's adverse effects on urban residents. In other words, it tells Las Vegas residents: you may not care about a small group of farming communities 300 miles north of you, but surely you care about higher water bills. This was a calculated message put in place by GBWN leaders, from the very beginning of the organization's efforts to oppose SNWA's plan. As Simeon Herskovits (2011), GBWN's lead attorney, conveyed in a presentation at a conference, the strategy was to make: "...a cogent economic case against the project." But discursively, the frame implicitly defends rural interests by highlighting its deleterious effects on the urban realm.

The "harmful for Las Vegas" frame is significant because it bridges rural and urban interests by showing how the effects of SNWA's project cross the rural-urban divide. It attempts to present SNWA's Groundwater Development Project as an affront to both rural and urban lifestyles, thus attempting to create further alliances united against SNWA's plan. Although the GBWN's intentions of this frame are to get Las Vegas residents to oppose SNWA's project, it is unclear whether or not they have been effective

in doing so, as many key-informants of the GBWN told me that one of the primary challenges facing the movement is to get residents of Las Vegas just to become aware of what SNWA is proposing to do, to say nothing of actively opposing it. Furthermore, as is the case with the aforementioned motivational place-frames, this frame is laden with contradictions, as I shall discuss in the following sections, when I explore the diagnostic and prognostic place-frames used by GBWN, which partly places blame on Las Vegas for SNWA's proposed plan while simultaneously presenting how Las Vegas "ought" to be.

Diagnostic Place-Frames

Whereas motivational place-frames are used to initiate activism by accentuating commonalities amongst stakeholders by downplaying member differences among members and forging strategic alliances through meaning-making, diagnostic place-frames identify problems and assign blame for the problems that motivate action in the first place. In this case, the GBWN's diagnostic place-frames grow out of the motivational frames. This is particularly true in the "there is no extra water" framing but is also true, to a lesser extent, in the "unsustainable urban sprawl" and "fountains in a desert" framings.

"There is no Extra Water"

GBWN leaders have used the landscapes of production and consumption constructed through motivational place-framing to highlight that fact that the already limited amount of water in Snake Valley is entirely appropriated—to the point of over-allocation—by agriculture *and* wildlife. They do this, in part, by pointing out that

ranching and farming taking place in Snake Valley has resulted in the drying up of springs and wells there. In other words, the problem in this diagnosis is, in short, that there is no extra water in Snake Valley. If there were, springs would not be drying-up. Paradoxically, the blame is placed on the ranching and farming activities. This construction presents an additional contradiction with respect to the “ecological rancher” frame, which depicts farming and ranching activities in Snake Valley as being purely beneficial to the environment and a sustainable use of the valley’s water.

The GBWN film presents a clear example of the “there is no extra water” frame when the narrator states, in reference to dried-up springs in Snake Valley: “What we are clearly learning is that where there is pumping water to farmland, whether it's Baker Ranches, or other ranches, or Eskdale [a small religious community in Snake Valley], we're mining the water. It's going down every year. It is clearly proven that this pipeline project taking this much water out of our valley simply isn't going to work. It will be an environmental disaster.” This example of “there is no extra water” tries to shift the blame to SNWA but essentially glances over the fact the water is being “mined” by farmers, focusing instead on how “this pipeline project taking out this much water isn’t going to work.” Here, we begin to see how framing is an ongoing practice that involves negotiating the contradictions present within existing frames.

Evidence that “there is no extra water” was also evident in interviews. One key-informant placed blame on the recent drought and fire-suppression policy in Great Basin National Park (which has led to an increase in water consuming Rocky Mountain juniper trees), in addition to the increase of agricultural production, as being responsible for the shortages in water.

So you see the park, the drought, and then the fact that there is an increase in agricultural development—there are more pivots, more areas put into production—it’s drying things up. And so you just look at that, you’d say we’re over appropriated.

Although this individual brought up the drought as a reason for springs drying-up, drought and climate change are rarely addressed in GBWN documents, which is surprising considering the effects of climate change on water shortages in the American Southwest now and in the future.

Another issue that fails to be mentioned in GBWN discourse is water policy in the American West; a policy that is frequently cited as responsible for wasteful water usage in the region (Cooley et al., 2007). Again, the high level of water usage that the law of prior-appropriation supports (i.e., the “use it or lose it” imperative), is clearly evident in this case, as one GBWN member from Snake Valley commented to me during an interview:

I think one of the reasons why the ranch has so many pivot fields, is because they had to show use and I think because of it, in a way, their business has flourished, because they have more production, more everything now.

Even in this comment, we see that she is just observing what is happening, not necessarily critiquing it. GBWN must operate within this system of water law to successfully resist the pipeline project. This is the same system that SNWA is using to acquire the water-rights for its pipeline project, for instance by acquiring farms and ranches in neighboring valleys just so they can hold water rights there. In other words, taxpaying Las Vegas residents are now “in the ranching business” thanks to SNWA.

“Unsustainable Urban Sprawl”

Another prominent *diagnostic place-frame* in GBWN discourse is characterized by the theme of unsustainable urban sprawl. In this construction, GBWN blames the close relationship between SNWA, state and city politicians, and developers in the construction industry for the rampant and explosive urban growth Las Vegas has experienced in recent years. This growth requires more water in an already over-allocated city; growth which has prompted SNWA to seek water from distant rural places via its Groundwater Development Project. By framing their opposition in the context of urban sprawl, GBWN attributes the relationship between these three entities (i.e., SNWA, politicians, and developers) as the result developer greed and political corruption, all at the expense of the greater public good for both urban and rural citizens. Here, we see the same structural relationship between the rural and the urban that is present in the “It’s harmful for Las Vegas” motivational framing.

In GBWN discourse, one development and developer in particular served as the poster-child for the unsustainable urban sprawl, Harvey Whittemore’s Coyote Springs. First proposed in 1998, Coyote Springs was to be a community of 160,000 homes on platted lots located sixty miles north of Las Vegas on the Lincoln County/Clark County line in the Mojave Desert (Robinson, 2013). Although news sources vary on the exact number, it was to have anywhere between 12-18 golf courses. Coyote Springs had one problem: no access to the water necessary to sustain 160,000 homes, not to mention the water necessary for multiple golf courses. In 2004, as members of the GBWN claim in interviews, the site’s primary architect and investor, Harvey Whittemore, called on Senator Harry Reid to help him acquire the water necessary for Coyote Springs. It was

around this time—again, according to sources from the GBWN—that SNWA announced its plans to revive its Groundwater Development Project, which was originally proposed in 1989.

Here is an example of the type of coverage GBWN gave Coyote Springs, found on its website in April of 2104. Notice some of the problems and blame assigned by the GBWN, in this “unsustainable urban sprawl” diagnostic place-frame, including the blame it places on “lobbyist turned developer, Harvey Whittemore” and the problems that will occur because of the development:

COYOTE SPRINGS—A HUGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MOJAVE DESERT

The new golf course based city in Coyote Valley in southern Nevada would demand at least 80,000 acre-feet of groundwater annually to supply the development. Currently in its “beginnings” with one of the golf courses nearing completion in 2008 and with plans to build 160,000 houses on 18 golf courses, the massive development in the Mojave Desert is the brainchild of Reno lawyer and lobbyist turned developer, Harvey Whittemore. A small portion of the groundwater is being sought within the valley itself. Pumping within Coyote Spring Valley could harm critical springs in the Moapa National Wildlife Refuge just a few miles to the south and Lake Mead National recreation Area, but the majority of the groundwater would still have to come from more than a hundred miles away. And, the developer plans to pump most of that water from the desert in eastern Nevada and pipe the water using the publicly financed pipeline the SNWA is currently trying to get permission to build. Coyote Springs Development would occupy a valley which currently has no permanent residents and is 60 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

Of course, the alleged close relationships between Harvey Whittemore, Harry Reid, and SNWA’s decision to revive its pipeline project cannot be fully proven, but the fact that Harvey Whittemore is currently serving a two-year sentence in federal prison for funneling \$133,400 in illegal campaign contributions to Senator Harry Reid’s campaign

in 2007 (German, 2014) seems to validate some of the GBWN's suspicions. As one interviewee told me:

I think the biggest challenge is trying to inform the people of Las Vegas that the water isn't for them, that it's a scheme. I mean many people, including, in my opinion, argue that somebody by the name of Harvey Whittemore, thought they could get filthy rich by having growth in Southern Nevada and having the people of Southern Nevada who live there now, pay for it to make them rich, and he's going to jail, for paying off politicians.

Another stated:

One aspect that's kind of on that sidelines that was a major factor, was Coyote Springs and Harvey Whittemore. Harvey Whittemore is a good friend of Harry Reid... but for that development to happen, it HAD to have the pipeline. Yeah, so, it didn't matter whether there were negative effects, we were pretty well told that hat pipeline was going to go in.

In an interview with the alternative weekly news-source, *Las Vegas City Life*, the lead attorney for GBWN, Simeon Herskovits, discussed how Whittemore's development prompted members of the GBWN to approach him to work on the case:

It may have been 2004, when they approached me to talk about Coyote Springs and Harvey Whittemore. At that time they alluded to what they suspected was the connection between the proposed Coyote Springs development and SNWA's big proposed groundwater pipeline (Rake, 2013).

To be fair, Coyote Springs—which has yet to be brought to fruition because among other things it has yet to obtain water—is not the only unsustainable instance of urban sprawl in Las Vegas. However, it does make a compelling story of political corruption and its

connections to SNWA's Groundwater Development Project and therefore a target for GBWN framing.

“Fountains in a Desert”

In this diagnosis, GBWN focuses on how wasteful Las Vegas is with its water. GBWN blames the false perception held by many of its residents, businesses, and leaders for the city's profligate water usage, namely that Las Vegas is a desert oasis. There are few images that could better convey and represent Las Vegas' wasteful water habits than its many elaborate fountains on the Las Vegas Strip. Turning again to GBWN's film, in one scene there is a still-frame image of the Bellagio Hotel and its iconic, enormous, and majestic looking fountains, as the folksy voice of Dean Baker proclaims: “Water is tremendously valuable. Whether they need it or not, they'll pump it and turn it into money.” His statement suggests that using valuable water in a desert for something as trivial as fountains is not necessary. Another example of the “fountains in a desert” frame was at the 2014 Snake Valley Festival, where I saw a group of adolescents holding a twenty five-foot banner that read: “FOUNTAINS IN A DESERT NO LONGER POSSIBLE!” which serves as evidence that this has become a widely utilized diagnostic place-frame for this movement.

In essence, the purpose of this place-frame is to show that Las Vegas does not live within its means, and that the image of a desert oasis provides cover for this profligacy. When you compare Las Vegas' water usage (which on average uses 220 gallons of water per person per day) to other arid American Southwest cities, such as Tucson (which uses 130 gallons per person per day), or Albuquerque (which uses 148 gallons of water per

person per day)—Las Vegas also happens to be drier than these two cities—it is doing an exceedingly poor job of conserving its water (Cooley et al., 2007), as is posited by the “fountains in a desert” frame. In other words, this way of framing the problem points out that Las Vegas does not live within the confines of its aridity, as one rural GBWN member, a former long-term Las Vegas resident himself, told me:

The fact that Las Vegas has prospered on the image that they live outside of the real world; that you go to Vegas, it's a different place, that there are fountains in the desert, and people live in these great big 'McMansion-warehouses.' There is the impression that Vegas doesn't live by the rules, and unfortunately, that's not true—you have to live by the laws of physics.

It should be mentioned that using the fountains of the Las Vegas strip as a symbol for Las Vegas' wasteful water habits is not be entirely fair, as the resort-hotels where fountains are usually found are some of the most efficient water users in the city—resorts account for just 7% of total water usage in Las Vegas (Cooley et. al, 2007). In fact, if GBWN truly wanted accuracy in conveying how wasteful Las Vegas is with its water, they would use as their symbol the single-family residential home, which accounts for 40% of Las Vegas' total water usage (Cooley et. al, 2007). If they made this argument, however, it would appear as an attack on the residents of Las Vegas; residents that GBWN would like to have as allies in their fight against SNWA's project. Furthermore, GBWN has in fact been critical of single-family residential homes, albeit in the form of attacking developer greed, as is illustrated in the “unsustainable urban-sprawl” diagnostic place-frame.

As I have shown in this section and previous sections of this chapter, the Great Basin Water Network created a set of diagnostic place-frames and discourses that both

highlighted problems and assigned blame for the problems associated with rural water availability, urban water consumption, and explosive development in Las Vegas. In the “there is no extra water” diagnostic place-frame, GBWN drew from the landscape of production and landscape of consumption motivational place-frames to illustrate that all of the water in Snake Valley, and other valleys that SNWA wishes to pump from, is currently being used, be it by ranchers or by wildlife, and in the case of “the ecological rancher” frame, by both simultaneously. Additionally, to further emphasize this point (that there is no extra water), GBWN has admitted that the current agricultural pumping in Snake Valley has resulted in wells and springs drying-up, thus making a case that SNWA would not be able to pump in these valleys without causing severe environmental damage. In the “unsustainable urban sprawl” diagnostic place-frame, GBWN attributes SNWA’s need for extra water to explosive urban growth, which has been fueled by developer greed, corrupt politicians, and a water authority that is willing to serve these interests. Lastly, in the “fountains in a desert” diagnostic place-frame, GBWN argues that Las Vegas is inefficient with its water, by using the image of the city’s elaborate fountains to suggest this. The critique of this image, in turn, tries to dispel the false notion that Las Vegas, Nevada—the driest city in the United States—is some sort of desert oasis.

In the following section, I will address how GBWN has created a set of prognostic place-frames that serve to alleviate some of the problems touched on in the set of diagnostic place-frames, by attempting to come up with alternatives to SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project, which show how Las Vegas “ought to be,” while

additionally inciting grassroots participation, resulting in the many legal victories GBWN and its allies have experienced.

Prognostic Place-Frames

As Martin (2003) describes it, prognostic place-frames are those frames that: (1) identify actions for stakeholders to take, (2) address resolutions to problems, all while (3) identifying how a place “should be.” I say *should be*, because in prognostic place-frames places are presented in idealized versions that ignore potential issues of contention in an effort to bring stakeholders together. So, for example, in Martin’s (2003) work, activists in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, MN formed a set of prognostic place-frames in neighborhood organization newsletters that portrayed an idealized version, or place-frame, of Frogtown (i.e., that it was a place of racial unity and harmony) at the expense of certain neighborhood realities, such racial tensions, inner city poverty, and gentrification.

During the course of my document/interview analysis, I uncovered two primary prognostic place-frames constructed by GBWN. “Saving Las Vegas” re-imagines how the city should be: a city whose water usage matches its water available, through conservation efforts and restricted growth measures. What is significant and markedly different about the “saving Las Vegas” prognostic place-frame, compared to the prognostic place-frames Martin (2003) discusses, is that instead of reimagining how Snake Valley (where the activism in this movement is centered) should be, GBWN reimagines how Las Vegas should be. The idealized version of Snake Valley, by contrast, appears in the motivational framing. Furthermore, the “saving Las Vegas” frame actually

does not idealize Las Vegas (like the place-frames in Frogtown); it instead provides an alternative vision for the city.

Through the second prognostic place-frame, “grassroots measures,” GBWN calls for stakeholders to take action against the pipeline by encouraging them to donate money, protest, and file legal forms against SNWA and other governmental agencies. I argue that this prognostic place-frame was particularly successful, as the actions stakeholders took at the behest of the GBWN in the earlier days of the protest, have resulted in tangible legal victories for GBWN and its allies.

“Saving Las Vegas”

Many of the problems and issues identified in the motivational and diagnostic place-frames culminate in the “saving Las Vegas” construction, which issues a panacea to the city’s ills. The solutions offered in this prognostic place-frame make SNWA’s Groundwater Development Project seem unnecessary. In short, the underlying message in “saving Las Vegas” is quite simple: the city needs to find better methods to conserve its water. If it does, there will be no need for SNWA to pump groundwater from rural valleys hundreds of miles away. Saving Las Vegas means rejecting the SNWA plan.

GBWN materials suggest that Las Vegas can save water in a number of ways, but the primary solutions which are offered are: (1) limit growth and development in Las Vegas, (2) implement a variety of water-saving policies in the city, such as the mandatory use of water efficient technologies in homes and businesses (e.g., low-flow toilets and grey water systems), (3) renegotiate the 1922 Colorado River Compact, also known as the “Law of the Colorado,” which gives Nevada a disproportionately low (compared to

its population) amount of Colorado River water, and (4) use another expensive and technologically complicated method (other than a 300 mile underground pipeline) to bring more water to Las Vegas: desalinization. Nowhere else are these solutions brought together more clearly than in the March 2014 issue of the *Water Gab* newsletter, in a segment titled “Saving Money, Saving Water, Saving Las Vegas”:

... There are better, more rational and less costly alternatives consisting of four independent steps. **First**, the community must recognize the need for a more sustainable approach to growth. Instead of *bigger*, think *viable* and *livable*. Las Vegas must live within its current development footprint. **Next**, Las Vegas must conserve and stretch its scarce water resources. The meager cash-for-grass program [a program implemented by SNWA] is not enough. An expanded program resorting water patrols and fines, and eliminating outdoor water features, and installing low-flush toilets, recirculating hot-water systems and dual potable and grey water systems would be a start. Per capita consumption must rapidly fall from its present 220 gallons per day to somewhere beneath 180, thereby creating “free” water to sustain modest growth. **Third**, the “law of the Colorado River” from the 1920s must be revamped. The law over allocates the waters of the Colorado River and fails to take into account modern needs and climate change. Under the present law, 78 percent of the lower Colorado goes to irrigating California and Arizona agriculture, using outdated methods. **Finally**, spending on a short term \$15.5 BILLION pipeline should be re-programed. Desalinated water worldwide is becoming commonplace and less expensive. Desalted water could be exchanged for shares of river water. True, desal [*sic*] has its challenges. However, starting now, these steps are doable, rational, essential and grounded in reality of future water scarcity.

In this example of GBWN framing, the solutions clearly serve to alleviate the problems portrayed in several of the diagnostic and motivational place-frames. One of the underlying themes in this statement, and more broadly, in the “saving Las Vegas” diagnostic place-frame, is that these water saving solutions will ultimately save Las Vegas residents money. In the “harmful for Las Vegas” framing, the primary motivator was that the pipeline project is too expensive for urban residents. By offering a solution

to this problem, the “saving Las Vegas” prognostic place-frame is supposed to appeal to urban residents by ameliorating the supposed financial injustices that SNWA’s pipeline project would impose on them. Furthermore, by suggesting that Las Vegas restrict its growth, this diagnostic place-frame also serves to ameliorate the other problems associated with explosive growth in Las Vegas, such as the rise in a lower quality of life for urban residents, as GBWN suggests is happening as a result of unrestricted growth.

Not only does proposing to restrict growth in Las Vegas improve the problems associated with the “harmful for Las Vegas” theme, but it also serves to solve some of the problems identified in the “unsustainable urban-sprawl” diagnosis. It does so by suggesting that planners and developers should change their way of thinking about growth in Las Vegas. In other words, as the example above suggests, “Instead of *bigger*, think *viable* and *livable*. Las Vegas must live within its current development footprint.”

The “saving Las Vegas” framing also offers solutions to the “fountains in a desert” diagnosis (which places blame on Las Vegas for its profligate use of water) by offering ways in which the city can stop being wasteful with its water. This connection is summarized in the GBWN slogan: “Fountains in a desert no longer possible.” While I placed this slogan under the “fountains in a desert” diagnostic place-frame theme, one could also argue that this theme also belongs under the “saving Las Vegas” prognostic place-frame theme, since it clearly is proposing a vision, or a solution, of how Las Vegas ought to be—a vision of Las Vegas that does not include fountains and the wasteful water behaviors they represent. I mention this to illustrate the often overlapping nature of the systematic coding system I have employed, which is by no means definitive, but which

serves to distinguish among the variety of place-frames (and their purposes) the GBWN has used in their resistance against the pipeline project.

Finally, what is also noteworthy about the “saving Las Vegas” prognostic place-frame is the suggestions it makes for rewriting the “law of the Colorado,” and for implementing unconventional technologies such as desalinization. To begin with, by calling for the Colorado River compact be opened up to a “re-write” suggests that the “saving Las Vegas” place-frame is not only proposing solutions for how Las Vegas should reconsider its water usage, but how Nevada, and the western United States as a whole, should reconsider how it uses its water, as the Colorado River serves as a source of water for over 30 million people in the region (Cooley et al., 2007).

Second, by suggesting that desalinization plants be considered—which would be located on the coasts of California and Mexico, thereby freeing up water further upstream on the Colorado—the GBWN is in some respect proposing a “plan-b” to water conservation in Las Vegas. Every time desalinization is mentioned, whether in interview data or GBWN media materials, it is always alluded to as a last resort—something that may have to happen many years down the line, if conservation efforts fail to get initiated. As one key-informant suggested:

Ultimately, 30, 40, 50, years down the road, we're going to have to look at is desalinized water and what we're proposing is a pipeline that would come from the Pacific Ocean or the Gulf of California, and be powered by solar energy to pump water from those sources to the Las Vegas Valley.

This can be attributed to the fact that (as the language in the example from the newsletter implies) desalinization is considered to be quite costly and energy intensive, thereby

raising the question: *would desalinization really be much better than the pipeline project?*

Additionally, proposing desalinization, because of the costs associated with it, somewhat undermines the financial arguments against SNWA's pipeline project.

However, regardless of the qualms that may be present in some of the solutions that GBWN has offered in order to help solve Las Vegas' water problems (mostly found in its proposal for desalinization, because of its associated costs and energy usage), the important thing is that in the process of resisting SNWA's Groundwater Development Project, the Great Basin Water Network has opened up a new conversation about how Las Vegas, and more broadly, the arid American West, is using scarce water resources. If urban population centers in this arid region are to continue to grow at the rate they have been growing (especially Las Vegas), then the solutions offered in the "saving Las Vegas" diagnostic place-frame should be seriously considered. However, these solutions will be hard to implement and they will require that Las Vegas face some harsh realities, as one member of GBWN from Salt Lake City stated:

I anticipate that we are going to have to help Nevada find a better alternative than this pipeline project and that will be a big challenge trying to turn this great big ship around, and to get the public engaged in Las Vegas... A lot of people have made money on the growth of this city in the desert, but they need to come to grips with some serious sustainability questions. They need to probably look at quality growth, and infill, and urban boundaries, and no more of this grabbing pieces of desert and exporting water to it so you can grow single family homes, in platted subdivisions. They have got to start looking at some New Urbanism. Some revitalization of core parts of Vegas are really needed desperately...it's about a means of transition, Las Vegas needs to grow up.

And if Las Vegas is to continue to survive, the key-informant quoted above is absolutely correct: Las Vegas must change.

“Grassroots Measures”

Whereas the “saving Las Vegas” prognostic place-frame presented water saving solutions for urban residents and leaders of Las Vegas to consider utilizing, the “grassroots measures” framing offers actions for rural residents to take against the pipeline project. In some way, then, this place-frame could be called “saving Great Basin.” However, these actions have nothing to do with conserving water. In this construction, movement leaders inform rural residents and other GBWN allies, mostly through the *Water Gab* newsletter, how to engage in political/legal action against SNWA, and other agencies that supported SNWA’s project, like the BLM and the Nevada State Engineer. These proposed political actions were performed in the form of three measures.

In the first measure, GBWN assisted rural pipeline opponents in filing protests (official notarized legal documents) against the Nevada State Engineer for awarding the water rights necessary for SNWA’s revival of the 1989 pipeline project. In the second, GBWN facilitated opponents of the pipeline in lodging official comments on BLM’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which was conducted by BLM to investigate what effects SNWA’s pipeline project would have on public lands if BLM granted rights-of-way to SNWA. Last, GBWN solicited donations from pipeline opponents, through pleas in the *Water Gab* newsletter as well as by helping to create the Snake Valley Festival, a now annual festival hosted in Baker, NV, put on primarily for the purposes of raising funds for the GBWN.

In 2010, GBWN won a lawsuit filed in 2006 with the Nevada Supreme Court, to allow rural residents to file new protests with the Nevada State Engineer against their decision to award SNWA with water rights in rural eastern Nevada valleys for their

pipeline project. Because these water rights were originally granted in 1989, new objectors (such as those residents who were not yet born, or who did not live in the valleys at the time) could not file any new protests with the Nevada State Engineer. GBWN's victory in this lawsuit changed all of that, and new protestors were allowed to object to the Nevada State Engineer's decision. In order to assist the new protestors in filing their official legal objections, GBWN arranged and scheduled "Protest Workshops" throughout the state of Nevada. As the *Water Gab* newsletter from March of 2011 states, these "Protest Workshops" helped objectors "...complete a protest and get it notarized." Clearly, getting many legal documents prepared, notarized, and sent off is no easy task. Especially considering that each protest application cost \$25. But thanks to GBWN's Protest Workshops, the Nevada State Engineer's office received over 2,300 official notarized protests (greatbasinwaternet.net, 2015), which greatly played a factor in Judge Estes' 2013 decision to overturn the water rights awarded to SNWA by the Nevada State Engineer.

In 2011, the BLM released a 1,400-page draft of its Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS was completed by scientists at BLM in conjunction with 16 other entities including SNWA, and took four years to complete (Knapp, 2011). Essentially, the DEIS showed that the Groundwater Development Project would have moderate to devastating effects—some deemed "irreversible and irretrievable"—in all of the valleys that SNWA would be pumping from (BLM, 2011). The most damaging of these effects would occur from groundwater tables falling 50-200 feet over the course of 75-200 years; some of these negative effects include subsidence (where the ground basically "sinks"), mass vegetation die-off (especially for phreatophyte plants, which rely

heavily on groundwater) and the resulting “dustbowl conditions” that would result, and other harms inflicted on plant and animal communities as the result of the loss in various springs and wetlands in the area (Knapp, 2008). Furthermore, the DEIS revealed that SNWA’s project would cost \$15.7 billion dollars (www.blm.gov).

To help pipeline opponents make sense of the enormous and complicated BLM DEIS, GBWN put together a “Water Grab EIS Guide.” In this document, GBWN summed up the many negative effects of SNWA’s project, provided alternatives to the pipeline, and then directed its members and allies to take action against SNWA’s project by submitting comments to BLM regarding the DEIS. To help members submit comments, GBWN supplied members with a checklist of complaints against the BLM’s DEIS to be mailed to the agency. This checklist, and the “Water Grab EIS Guide” in general, helped pipeline opponents strengthen and articulate their opposition against SNWA and the BLM. The end result of this campaign was that GBWN helped gather 20,461 comments asking the BLM not to allow rights-of-way access to SNWA for its pipeline project (greatbasinwaternetnetwork.net).

Despite the extensive and sustained GBWN protest against granting the rights-of-way for SNWA’s project, in 2012 BLM issued a “Record of Decision” allowing SNWA rights-of-way access to Spring, Cave, Dry Lake, and Delamar Valleys (Maffly, 2013). Again, any decision on Snake Valley had been postponed because of its trans-state boundaries. In 2014, GBWN and its allies filed an appeal against BLM’s decision in the courts, where it still waits. Though one could argue that this portion of the “grassroots measures” diagnostic place-frame should not be considered successful, as the BLM still issued rights-of-ways to SNWA, it would be false to do so, as much of the information

gleaned and the momentum gained by GBWN during this campaign has been used in further measures of resistance against SNWA's pipeline project, which *has* resulted in court decisions ruling in GBWN's favor.

The last of the "grassroots measures" GBWN employed to advance its cause is in the form of asking its members and allies for donations. A common narrative running through this theme is one that portrays the grassroots-funded and rural-based GBWN as "David" and the deep-pocketed SNWA as "Goliath." This narrative was fully present at the first Snake Valley Festival held in Baker, NV in 2010—a festival created for the purposes of raising funds to help defray GBWN legal costs against SNWA. At this event, as the very first issue of the *Water Gab* newsletter from August of 2010 describes, a parade float depicted a "10-foot Goliath Water Grab" (an enormous figurine in a trailer being pulled by a pickup truck) defeated by "Desert Davy's slingshot, a Shoshone in native garb" (that, judging from the small photo in the newsletter, looks to be played by a child in the back of the pickup truck).

Aside from using the imagery of "a Shoshone in native garb" to represent David (which is more than a little problematic considering the history of contention between local Shoshone peoples and settlers), in many ways the "David vs. Goliath" metaphor is apt. SNWA is one of the most well-funded entities in the state of Nevada, and the GBWN has been funded, in part, by small, individual donations. During the course of my interviews, however, I uncovered two sources of funding that have been paramount for GBWN. The first one is the government of White Pine County, Nevada—a vital source of financial and legal support for this movement. The second source of funding is of a more mysterious origin. During the course of my interviews, three people told me that

GBWN was the recipient of a large anonymous grant from an internationally based, non-profit environmental organization. Everyone who mentioned this grant made it clear that it was substantial, and that it contributed greatly to the group's successes. However, every single person was also quite explicit that they could not tell me where it came from.

In any case, through these three prognostic measures, GBWN has been effective in establishing the grassroots support needed to challenge such a powerful and well-connected organization, such as SNWA. In fact, they have been so successful in establishing grassroots support that the organization's fights have mostly moved beyond the grassroots sphere into the legal arena, making it a challenge for movement leaders to keep the grassroots motivated and connected, as one woman, a board member of GBWN who lives part-time in Snake Valley told me:

One of the things that is important to understand...Great Basin Water Network has been really involved in, since its inception in 2004, a lot of what I would consider grassroots work: you know, going to meetings, getting people to show up to comment on something the Bureau of Land Management is doing, showing up to state water engineer hearings, filing protests before the state engineer (which is a piece of paper), but, now things are moving into this legal arena, and there is much less to be done at the local level, in terms of protests and organizing and that sort of thing. So, that's an interesting little stage in the movement and certainly in the way Great Basin Water Network is operating and we're working through that, to figure out how we can still stay connected.

Last, although the "grassroots measures" are more about offering solutions presented in the form of political actions to take, rather than idealizing how Snake Valley, or any other place for that matter, *should be*, they are still worthy of being considered *place-frames* because they appeal to local resident's senses of place by reminding participants what is at stake if SNWA is to get its way, thus underscoring the importance

of taking action against them, as this quote from the “Water Grab EIS Guide” exemplifies.:

BLM EIS Shows Water Grab Will Destroy Rural Nevada

The Future of one of America’s last great landscapes is at stake! A massive groundwater-mining scheme threatens to dry up the heart of the Great Basin of Nevada and Utah. We need your help to stop it!

Conclusion

The examples and results that have been presented in this chapter illustrate the important role that place-making plays in collective action. In this case, the Great Basin Water Network created a series of collective action place-frames, or place-frames, through discourse, that constructed various versions of Snake Valley, and other rural valleys in eastern Nevada, in order to appeal to a diverse set of stakeholders. However, as this chapter has discussed, some of these place-frames are somewhat contradictory. For example, the “rural way of life” place-frame depicts Snake Valley as place of utility, which in turn helps contribute to local environmental conditions for wildlife expressed in the “ecological rancher” place-frame. However, these particular place-frames fail to completely acknowledge the problems associated with growing water intensive crops in the Great Basin Desert—though GBWN alludes to them by acknowledging springs have been drying up as the result of farming and ranching. In addition, the organization constructed a set of place-frames that simultaneously tried to appeal to residents of Las Vegas (for example, the “harmful for Las Vegas” place-frame), while chastising the city for its wasteful water usage in other set of discourses.

Furthermore, another issue raised by the frames constructed by GBWN is the absence of any mention to Swamp Cedars in Spring Valley, the location of one of the worst Indian massacres in United State history (Lahren, 2010). Though GBWN documents frequently acknowledge local Shoshone and Goshute tribes as members of the coalition that has formed to fight SNWA’s pipeline project, any explicit mentions of the massacres, or Swamp Cedars more generally, a scared site to the Shoshone and Goshute people, are absent in organizational discourse. Which is unexpected in light of the fact that the Goshutes consider SNWA’s pipeline project, “The biggest threat to the Goshute way of life since European settlers first arrived on Goshute lands more than 150 years ago” (www.goshutewater.org), which raises the question why such an important place is missing from GBWN place-frames and discourse.

However, despite of the lack of attention GBWN gives to the Swamp Cedars massacre site, the existing place-frames GBWN has constructed, however contradictory some of them may be, have been successful in their purposes, as the Great Basin Water Network has been victorious, so far, in their resistance against Sothern Nevada Water Authority’s Groundwater Development Project—a project that has been proven will cause severe environmental degradation, and destruction of important cultural sites (like the Swamp Cedars massacre site in Spring Valley), to the rural valleys it would pump groundwater from. In the following chapter, I will discuss how these place-frames were all made possible—and the Great Basin Water Network more broadly—through a preexisting network established in resistance against the MX Missile Project in the early 1980s, in attempts to uncover, what Pierce et al. (2011) call, the “relational place-making” process behind this particular movement.

Table 2. Great Basin Water Network Place-Frames

<i>Motivational Place Frames</i>	<u>A Rural Way of Life</u> Frames Snake Valley as a landscape of production that supports “traditional” rural values	<u>A Place of Wonder and Beauty</u> Frames Snake Valley as landscape of consumption that supports environmental beauty and diversity	<u>The Ecological Rancher</u> Bridges the rural-urban divide of “rural way of life” frames and “place of wonder and beauty” frames	<u>It’s Harmful for Las Vegas</u> Appeals to LV residents by arguing that the pipeline project is too costly and will reduce quality of life in Las Vegas
<i>Diagnostic Place Frames</i>	<u>There is No Extra Water</u> Springs are drying up from productive farming and wildlife Is abundant	<u>Unsustainable Urban Sprawl</u> The proposed pipeline is the result of rapid growth, developer greed, and corrupt politicians		<u>Fountains In a Desert</u> LV is wasteful with its water and its residents need to accept that LV is not an oasis, but the driest city in the USA
<i>Prognostic Place Frames</i>	<u>Saving Las Vegas</u> LV needs to restrict growth, save water, get more Colorado River water, and consider desalinization		<u>Grassroots Measures</u> GBWN members need to file official protests and donate funds to GBWN	

Chapter 6: The MX Missile Project and Relational Place-Making

As two of the primary goals of this thesis are to investigate and determine how GBWN has successfully managed to resist the implementation of SNWA's pipeline project, and also to contribute to the body of research that investigates the role place-making plays in collective action, this chapter contributes to these goals by illuminating the roles networks have played in the formation of the GBWN and their subsequent legal victories.

Whereas the previous chapter discussed the set of frames GBWN constructed in their campaign against SNWA's pipeline project, and the implications they have for bridging rural and urban interests, in this chapter I turn attention to some of the processes that have helped shape these frames, and that, more broadly, assisted in the formation of the GBWN. In order to facilitate this discussion, I use Pierce et al.'s (2011) concept of relational place-making. As I first laid out in the literature review, relational place-making advances works on the construction of place, like the work put forth by Martin (2003), by analyzing the roles networks and politics play in the place-making process, roles that Pierce et al. claim are neglected.

In this particular case, I uncovered two important elements that have been vital to this movement's success relating to networks and political processes. First, the GBWN has been largely successful thanks in part to networks formed in the early 1980s in resistance to the MX Missile Project. Second, this network, which connects actors and institutions across Snake Valley's bi-state location, has positioned the GBWN to

challenge SNWA's pipeline at many different levels of local, state, and federal government.

MX Missile Project and the Creation of a Grassroots Network

The MX Missile Project was an intercontinental ballistic missile system first proposed in 1971 by the US Air Force, then later supported by Presidents Carter and Reagan. The project would have brought 200 MX nuclear missiles, 4,600 concrete shelters, and hundreds of miles of roads to the Great Basin Desert, to some of the very same valleys SNWA wishes to pump from, including Snake Valley (Glass, 1993). However, resistance to the project was fierce, as it would have created an incredible amount of environmental damage to the area. Eventually the project was downsized and proposed for relocation to parts of Nebraska and Wyoming; which it eventually was, thanks, in part, to the resistance movement that was formed against it, and to thanks in part to a broader trend toward nuclear disarmament (Glass, 1993).

Early on in the interview process, I learned that many members of GBWN first came together in the early 1980s to fight the MX Missile Project. This coalition includes the very the same stakeholders involved in the movement to stop the pipeline project, mostly consisting of rural ranchers and urban-based environmentalists from Utah and Nevada, and to a lesser extent, tribal members from local Shoshone and Goshute reservations. With reference to the origins of the GBWN, one interviewee stated:

It [GBWN] started basically in 2004, and at the core were group of activists, both in Utah and Nevada, who had battled the MX Missile proposal of the early 80s and successfully derailed that project because of

its impacts on the environment, sacred places, and rural lifestyle. So, the bed of the nucleus, the people, and a lot of them reconvened.

And another interviewee, a board member who has been active in representing GBWN's political interests in Salt Lake City and who was also active in resisting the MX Missile Project, stated:

It's the same coalition that came together around the MX: the cowboys and the Indians, the environmentalists, the hippies, the city folks, and even to a lesser degree, the LDS church, and you got Mormons in the movement and you got non-Mormons in the movement, so it's crossed all of those types of stereotypes of boundaries and we've all approached each other as real people and it's worked.

As these interview examples indicate, resistance to the MX Missile Project was the initial impetus for the formation of the diverse coalition that once again became active in response to SNWA's pipeline project.

The political and legal experience that this diverse coalition first gained through resisting the MX Missile Project has been instrumental in the success that GBWN has experienced in its fight against SNWA's pipeline project. One GBWN board-member acknowledged:

A lot of the foundation for what is keeping our coalition together and what makes it possible for us to be strategically smart about how to respond to this project is because many of us were united through that back in the day with MX.

In addition to pointing out the valuable experience gained through resisting the MX Missile Project, many of the interviewees emphasized the role the MX Missile

protests played in coalition building; a coalition, according to many GBWN members, that is responsible for much of the successes that the movement had been met with today. One woman, a Carson City resident and GBWN member who was active in resisting the MX Missile Project, stated:

...This started [the coalition] in the MX days...with us disagreeing on nearly everything, but coming together, kind of parking our metaphorical weapons at the door, and coming to sit around a table together and strategize about how to keep the MX Missile out of the Great Basin. That is a very useful model and it is very effective and very strong, because when you have the Sierra Club representative standing next to the rancher, and they got their arms around each other, or maybe they don't, but in this case they do, you know, that is really strong. We have a lot of stuff we disagree on, but we have these things that we all have in common and care about. We all want to save the land, for whatever we do with it.

She later went on to state:

This water fight is what we call a poster child for water fights throughout the country, but I also think that it is, in another way, both unique and powerful because of the coalition that has been put together based on these diverse constituencies that can agree on one thing and also all resonate in their own way with the place, with the landscape, with the utility of the valleys.

This interview excerpt is particularly significant, as it points out that place has been a bridge for bringing this diverse coalition together. This shared commitment to place was first recognized by stakeholders during the formation of the resistance campaign against the MX Missile Project, and then later honed—as the coalition reemerged in response to SNWA’s pipeline project—and presented in the form of place-frames tailored for resistance. As the interviewee quoted above explained: “...these diverse constituencies...can agree on one thing [resisting SNWA’s plan] and also all

resonate in their own way with the place, with the landscape, with the utility of the valleys.” It follows, then, that interpretations of the GBWN frames are as diverse as the group of stakeholders, as each group of stakeholders’ possess different perceptions of the places under threat from SNWA’s project. This accounts for at least some of the contradictions present within the GBWN frames, as for example in the contradictions regarding water usage and Snake Valley as a landscape of production *and* consumption.

A Relational Approach to Resistance

Pierce et al. (2011, 56) argue against an approach to place-framing research that would “...focus on places as specific localities, which a priori draws attention to people and events within the place, thus obscuring the role of outside connections or activities as forces shaping conditions within a certain locale.” It is therefore important to note that although this particular place—Snake Valley and the surrounding valleys—has played an important role in coalition building for this movement, there are in fact multiple places at multiple scales that are involved in the formation of this coalition and its network.

This relational approach to place is immediately apt to Snake Valley because of its position on the Utah/Nevada border; a position which makes it necessary to situate activism in the realm of two states’ governmental and judicial systems. For example, the GBWN network has a presence in both state capitals, Carson City and Salt Lake City, with politically active members living in both of those places, illustrating how, as Pierce et al. (2011, 58) contend, relational place-making reveals how networks and place interplay with one another in collective action, because it “extends networks by always grounding them in multiple, interconnected, multi-scalar and overlapping places.”

Another example of the relational and networked nature of place-making in this movement is evident in the way GBWN's lead attorney, Simeon Herskovits, has approached challenging SNWA's pipeline project in the courts. In a presentation given at a conference at the University of Utah, Herskovits explained the legal strategy he has used, and which he advises others to use when challenging large inter-basin water transfers in the West, by attacking the project at "every level of government" (2011):

Legally...the most effective way to counteract this, given the amount of money and the amount of political power on the part of those advancing these big inter-basin transfers [such as SNWA], is you have to attack it at every level of government. The federal level, when its applicable—and it almost always is in the West because there are public lands involved—involves challenges under the environmental laws and the public lands management law, and where possible, also using federal Indian law... The other level that is most common is state law. And there the water of law of the states is actually sometimes an important and valuable tool...and finally, the local government level I think is very frequently neglected and is actually a very powerful and useful arena in which to do this work. And I say that because I think planning—land use planning, water planning, and economic development planning at a local level, and not only the big urban centers, but also in rural communities—is a way of encouraging a discourse and then enshrining certain types of policy preferences and goals, in a way that than can influence and constrain decision makers in both the state law and federal law arena.

Though he does not state it in these terms, Herskovits is arguing that to remain successful against large inter-basin water transfers, one must utilize a legal and political network that encompasses multiple places and multiple scales, ranging from the federal to the local levels. Also noteworthy is the argument Herskovits makes in favor of engaging in political action at the local level, as it can eventually contribute to influencing federal policies and actions, a sentiment that Herskovits (2011) similarly echoed in the same

presentation when he declared “Like politics, all water is local, and it always seems to come down to a vote.”

This networked approach has certainly contributed greatly to GBWN’s successes, both at the grassroots and legal levels. For example, in the years leading up to Utah Governor Herbert’s unexpected decision not to sign the trans-state water compact with Nevada, which would have allowed Nevada to pump water from Snake Valley, GBWN activists in Salt Lake City played a key role in getting the governor not to sign the agreement. Although the governor said he good not sign the agreement “in good conscience,” the reality of the matter was that this decision came after years of a very intense and successful lobbying by members of GBWN.

One member in particular, a long term political activist in Salt Lake City who also played a large role in resisting the MX Missile Project, explained how he was able to get support for the GBWN from a number of different political entities, including the Utah State Legislature, the Salt Lake County Council, and several rural Utah county governments. The first step of GBWN’s political strategy involved getting Governor Herbert and other Utah politicians to come down to Snake Valley for a water tour:

In 2006 they [Utah and Nevada] were ready to sign this agreement. We invited the Legislative Interim Committee on Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Environment to visit Snake Valley, and we arranged this tour, and they went out and saw the springs and seeps... Dean [Baker] gave them the tour, showing them that the pumping that has taking place by the ranchers has caused the dry up of some springs and seeps and the dropping of the groundwater table to impress upon them that this export of groundwater would be devastating if you are already seeing impacts from a couple of additional pivots being put in per year by the locals...It was an eye opener for the legislative leadership in the environment, agriculture, and natural resources arena. So, we had everybody’s attention.

The same activist then described how GBWN publicized the trans-state agreement when it was leaked to the organization and how they used it a major tool to campaign against the governor to sign agreement:

Then what happened shortly after we took them out there in August [of 2007] and gave them the tour, in September somebody leaked the draft copy of the agreement to us, and they were ready to sign it, and once it got leaked, we made a major stink of it. I went to the Natural Resources Committee and got their support to put a hold on all this. Then we demanded that there be some public opportunity to review this, and then to have public hearings on this, and they said “no, we’re not going to hold public hearings on this,” and I said well, we’re going to hold our own then. And we rounded up the opposition of Salt Lake County council, and [Salt Lake County] Mayor Caroon wound up being a major supporter of this fight, and we got the legislative support. By the end of the end of the work we had been doing on this, over the period of some time we forced the creation of the Snake Valley Committee to advise to the governor on policy pertaining to this project, and we got funding for monitoring wells to be drilled to characterize the groundwater in Snake Valley and that’s still an operating deal... We just made this politically very difficult for the governor over the period of a couple of years and we were pretty much able to count on the legislature to do what ever we wanted, and the Millard county commissioners were critical, were just on top of it all the way, and were very unwilling to compromise, and they brought along Juab County. So we had a lot of alliances and allegiances and friendships with in the rural and urban counties. The Utah Association of Counties was very helpful for us. So, we just mounted a great political campaign here, we made it very difficult for the governor to sign the agreement.

By shining light on the political tactics mounted by GBWN through the lens of relational place-making, what we see described above is a political strategy that mobilized multiple scales of government (including the local, the county, and the state level) and a network that encompassed a large geographic area encompassing constituencies and actors in many different places (ranching from rural counties in central Utah and eastern Nevada to urban Salt Lake County) with the purposes of pressuring the

governor of Utah not to sign the compact. The end result of this strategy was a success, as Governor Herbert eventually declined to sign the water compact between Utah and Nevada in 2013, despite threat of lawsuits from SNWA (Smart, 2013).

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, much of the success GBWN has experienced is the result of a networked form of resistance, as most clearly articulated in the approach laid out by GBWN lead attorney, Simenon Herskovits (2011). This method of resistance is also expressed in the strategy that GBWN members took in their efforts to pressure Governor Herbert of Utah not to sign the water compact between Utah and Nevada, which would have allowed SNWA to pump groundwater from Snake Valley for its Groundwater Development Project.

One of the purposes of this chapter (and more broadly, this thesis) is to contribute to research on place-making and collective-action by using a “relational” place-making approach. I have done this by illustrating that the activism and movement successes situated in and around Snake Valley, have not occurred in situ, but have rather been the results of myriad outside connections and places. The most notable example of the outside connections at work in this case is in the form of a network that was first created in the early 1980s in response to the MX Missile Project. This network, which spans the city, county, and state scales—not to mention the rural/urban divide—has enabled GBWN to engage many different actors and agencies in coalition building and political action/strategizing, which ultimately contributed to this movement’s success, however

initially unlikely these successes may have seemed. As Simeon Herskovits (2011) explains:

Five and half years ago when I started working on this campaign, everyone assumed this project was unstoppable; it had been fast tracked...and many, many people who were concerned and opposed were being effectively shut out of the process. Now we have an entirely different position. Water rights that were previously granted to the Southern Nevada Water Authority have been rescinded or nullified by a Nevada Supreme Court decision we won, the procedure has been sent back to the beginning...

However, the struggle against SNWA's pipeline project continues today, as GBWN has several lawsuits awaiting decision in the courts—most notably against the BLM for allowing rights-of-way on public lands to SNWA for its pipeline project. Furthermore, if the amount of money SNWA has spent in recent years on technologies (such as cloud-seeding in the mountains of eastern Nevada) and legal costs is any indication of its commitment to the pipeline project, clearly it has no intentions of calling the project off anytime in the near future.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Future Research Directions

One of the primary goals of this case study was to examine how place was constructed through place-framing activities by GBWN for the purposes of resisting SNWA's Groundwater Development Project. As this thesis has shown, GBWN successfully constructed a set of place-frames that helped motivate a disparate group of stakeholders to take collective action against SNWA's pipeline project. GBWN place-frames were successful, in part, by appealing to differing stakeholder senses of place as is exemplified in the set of diverse place-frames represented in GBWN media and documents. For example, place-frames falling under "a rural way of life" category portray Snake Valley (and adjacent valleys) as a place of traditional agricultural activities and values, as a means to motivate stakeholders from rural ranching communities to join GBWN in fighting the pipeline project, while the "place of wonder and beauty" place-frames appeal to urban-based environmentalists by painting Snake Valley as place of unique, yet fragile, environmental wonders.

In many circumstances, these place-frames and the land use activities they portray (not to mention, the stakeholders they are trying to appeal to) would normally be at odds since they depict different, competing uses of water. However, as this thesis has shown, these contentions are reconciled by "the ecological rancher" frame, which illustrates ranching activities in Snake Valley as being beneficial for maintaining a rural lifestyle *and* for supporting wildlife in Snake Valley. In other words, "the ecological rancher" frame bridges rural and urban interests by showing Snake Valley as being a landscape of production and a landscape of consumption, essentially bringing together the elements of

rural identity at the forefront of the “politics of the rural” movement (Woods, 2003), while simultaneously incorporating the idyllic and often unrealistic conditions ascribed to rural places, as is represented in the “rural idyll” (Cloke and Little, 1997).

However, though the place-frames constructed and distributed by GBWN have been useful in motivating and organizing a diverse set of stakeholders in protest against SNWA’s pipeline project, ultimately, the organization’s successes can be attributed to the existence of a network of activists that was initially formed in the early 1980s to protest the MX Missile Project. As this thesis has illustrated, this network and the legal/political successes GBWN has experienced as a result of it, is indicative of how place-making activities, such as place-framing, are reliant on what Pierce et al. (2011) call “relational place-making.” Relational place-making posits that places are not created in-situ, but are in fact the result of a multitude of overlying places and people, which transcend scale and geographical location, and which operate in and are influenced by myriad of political processes.

This was certainly the situation in this instrumental case-study, where activists and legal council from GBWN relied on the connections formed in protest against the MX Missile Project, to challenge the pipeline project at many different scales of government and court, ranging from the local to the county, all the way up to the state and federal levels, while bridging the rural/urban divide. As aforementioned in this thesis, this mutli-scalar/relational approach to resistance—and the place-making activities it facilitated—was showcased when members of GBWN successfully lobbied the Governor of Utah not to sign the bi-state water compact between Utah and Nevada. This network, and the legal strategy it helped support, is a clear example of the relational nature of

place-making, and as such, this thesis contributes to the theoretical body of work done on relational place-making, by empirically supporting the notion that places—and by extension, place-frames—are created through a network of many different people and places, acting in and operating through a variety of political processes and systems. However, although the research presented in this thesis contributes to the broader body of literature pertaining to place-making activities by illustrating the inherent relational nature of place-making and collective action, it is not without its limitations, and because of this, to fully understand the context of the social movement formed in resistance against SNWA's Groundwater Development Project further research is needed.

One possible direction of future research would be to perform a place-frame/discourse analysis on media created by SNWA for the purposes of advocating for their Groundwater Development Project. Although I have not performed such an analysis, through my limited encounters with media produced by SNWA, I suspect that it would reveal SNWA has framed the rural valleys they wish to pump groundwater from as being virtually uninhabited and unsuitable for farming, while framing their pipeline project as being absolutely necessary for the future growth and economic health of Las Vegas. Furthermore, I also suspect that such an analysis would reveal SNWA has been rather ineffectual in their framing attempts to garner public support for their Groundwater Development Project, as is evident in their repeated courtroom losses against pipeline opponents, despite having support from federal agencies such the BLM and influential members of the US Congress (Leshy, 2008).

However, even with its limitations, another important facet that the research in this thesis has illuminated is how the resistance movement in protest against SNWA's

pipeline project, in the form of GBWN, has opened up a new conversation about how Las Vegas is using its scarce water resources. For a city that receives, on average, 4 inches of precipitation a year, and yet uses approximately 220 gallons of water per-person per-day (Cooley et al., 2007) this can only be seen as a positive step towards water conservation. This is particularly important, considering that climate change is poised to reduce water availability in the American West (Barnett et al., 2005). A problem compounded by the fact that the population of this region continues to be the fastest growing in the US (Jackson and Kuhlken, 2006).

As this thesis has shown, GBWN has successfully opened up this conversation by constructing a set of place-frames that illustrate how wasteful Las Vegas is with its water (as is exemplified in the “fountains in a desert” place-frame), while, additionally, constructing a set of frames that offer Las Vegas solutions to their water scarcity problems (e.g., the “saving Las Vegas” place-frames). However, as this thesis has also shown, GBWN place-frames are not without their problems. For example, while GBWN place-frames have been effective in criticizing how Las Vegas uses its water, and illustrating how *it should* use its water, for the most part, GBWN place-frames fail to address how water could be more efficiently used in the rural valleys the organization is aimed at protecting. However, despite this, the ability to construct varying, albeit somewhat contradictory, place-frames as a means to appeal to disparate stakeholders, is a testament to how flexible and powerful the place-making process is; a process, in this particular case, whose utility has been enhanced by the connections of a preexisting network. Furthermore, if the diverse coalition of people who have coalesced around this movement—and who are still currently engaged in protecting rural valleys in eastern

Nevada and western Utah against the encroaching grasp of the Southern Nevada Water Authority's Groundwater Development Project—are any indication of how useful a device place-framing is for obtaining power to be used against larger outside entities, then clearly other burgeoning social movements should take note: place matters.

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