Power and political process: The case of the Ivanpah Airport

Amy Gayle Walker

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation


https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/1407

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
The Thesis prepared by

Amy Walker

Entitled

Power and Political Process:

The Case of the Ivanpah Valley Airport

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Sociology

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Power and Political Process: The Case Of the Ivanpah Valley Airport

by

Amy Walker

Dr. Robert Futrell, Examination Committee Chair
Assistant Professor of Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This thesis examines power and political processes involved in the decision to construct a second commercial airport for Las Vegas, NV and the southern Nevada region. Using interview data and document analysis I argue that the organizational capacity of the state and its relative autonomy enabled state actors to dominate the airport's development process by defining the need and setting the agenda for the project. Additionally, state officials acquired the land for the project by circumventing established mechanisms for public participation and involvement. The findings support a state-centered approach to understanding who wields power and how in political processes. Ultimately, the case raises issues about the state's efforts to quell conflict by thwarting democratic involvement of citizens in this highly significant land development decision.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................. iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION ............................................................................. 1  
   The Setting ......................................................................................................... 2 
   Las Vegas Growth Through Tourism and Air Travel ....................................... 7 
   A New Airport: Costs and Benefits ................................................................. 11 
   The Argument .................................................................................................. 14 

CHAPTER 2  THEORETICAL MODELS .......................................................... 19  
   Land Development in the Socio-Political Context ........................................... 19 
   Power ............................................................................................................... 21 
   Pluralist Theory ................................................................................................ 23 
   State-Centered Theory .................................................................................... 26 
   Class-Based Theory ......................................................................................... 31 
   Recent Case Study Research ......................................................................... 36 
   Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 39 

CHAPTER 3  METHODOLOGY ......................................................................... 43  
   The Case Study Approach .............................................................................. 43 
   Methods ........................................................................................................... 47 
   Locus of Power ................................................................................................ 55 
   Class-Based Methodology .............................................................................. 57 
   Pluralist Methodology ...................................................................................... 59 
   State-Centered Methodology .......................................................................... 60 

CHAPTER 4  THE DECISION TO BUILD THE IVANPAH AIRPORT .............. 63  
   The Power of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Clark County Department of Aviation 64 
   Result of Autonomy: CCDA Defines the Need for a New Airport .................... 67 
   Airport Decision Made, Location Next ............................................................ 73 
   Ivanpah in the State-Centered View ............................................................... 79 

CHAPTER 5  THE NEXT STEP: ACQUIRING THE LAND ............................. 84  
   Land Acquisition in Southern Nevada ............................................................ 84 
   The Decision to Pursue Legislation .................................................................. 87 
   The State Benefits From the "End Around" ...................................................... 91 

CHAPTER 6  THE IVANPAH LEGISLATION .................................................... 95
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been successfully completed without the professional guidance and personal support of numerous colleagues, friends, and family. I would like to express my deep gratitude for my Chairperson, Dr. Robert Futrell, for his commitment to this research and my success. This thesis would not be as insightful or remarkable if it were not for his drive to make it the best it can possibly be. I want to thank Dr. Barbara Brents, Dr. Ron Smith, and Dr. Michael Bowers for their guidance and participation on this committee. Also, I would like to acknowledge my fellow graduate constituents in the Sociology program at UNLV (especially Bill, Eric, and Lisa) for their social, emotional, and academic support.

I am indebted to my mother, Beverly Walker, my father, Randy Walker, my sister, Allison Watt, and my grandmother, Evelyn Hardy (Amma), for their unconditional love and dedication that gave me strength during this pursuit. Lastly, very special thanks go to my friends back home, as they have always encouraged me to strive for no less than second best, and to Matt for his love and inspiration.
This thesis examines power and politics in land development in Las Vegas, Nevada. Specifically, I utilize a case study of the Ivanpah Valley airport project in southern Nevada to analyze questions about power and political process in major development decisions. I will argue that state actors and agencies may control land development in Las Vegas, with minimal public notoriety or participation in the process. In this case, there are two primary ways the state wields power over the land development process. One aspect involves the organizational structure of the state, specifically, the directional flow of power, authority, and autonomy of state agencies, and also the legitimized role the state has in defining needs and executing public policy. The other aspect of power in land development involves circumventing the normal, codified process of land release in Southern Nevada. The state side stepped the standard procedures established in land development, thereby omitting certain avenues for citizen participation in the process. Conceptually, I frame the analysis in the context of state-centered approaches to power and politics. In contrast to pluralism and elite theories, state-centered approaches focus on the state as the primary actor that autonomously makes decisions that best suit state interests. A great deal of
power rests in the hands of state agencies, and outside interest groups have virtually no influence in public policy decision outcomes. I find a significant degree of state-autonomy in this case, which raises issues about democracy and citizen involvement in decisions with such potentially large social and environmental impacts.

The Setting

Las Vegas is located in the southeastern corner of Nevada, and could be "the most geographically isolated major city" (McCracken 1996:1). It is about 25 miles northwest of Hoover Dam, and 225 miles northeast of Los Angeles. The next closest urban areas are about a day's drive, Reno (460 miles to the northwest), Salt Lake City (420 miles north), and Phoenix (290 miles southeast). Even the closest towns, Pahrump and Indian Springs, are over 40 miles from downtown Las Vegas. The Las Vegas Valley itself stretches 40 miles long and 15 miles wide, ranging in elevation from 1,500 to 3,000 feet above sea level. "It is rimmed on all sides by mountains, the highest of which is Charleston Peak" at 11,912 feet (McCracken 1996:1).

The landscape itself in which Las Vegas is situated is inhospitable for human existence. This desert region boasts approximately 320 sunny days per year, summer time temperatures steadily surpassing the 100 degrees mark, and a scarce annual rainfall of only 4.6 inches (McCracken 1996). Dry soil and rock, sparse vegetation, tree-less mountains, and extreme heat and wind best characterize the Las Vegas environment. Yet, despite its harsh conditions and
remoteness, Las Vegas continues to attract visitors by the tens of thousands. The allure of the neon lights, luxurious hotels, and prospects for hitting it big in the casinos, along with speedy weddings and no-hassle divorce laws, make Las Vegas one of America’s most popular tourist destinations in the world. Indeed, efforts have been made to make living in the harsh and unforgiving desert more comfortable. Residents, developers, and landscape artists have worked hard to produce an illusion of a lush, tropical environment in Las Vegas by planting palm trees, shrubs, and green lawns, and decorating casino hotels with fountains and exotic flowers.

Las Vegas is a compelling case in which to study political power manifested in land development for several reasons that center around themes of growth. To begin, the population of the metropolitan Las Vegas area has nearly doubled each decade since the 1950s (McKinnon 1998). "Las Vegas is the nation’s fastest growing metropolitan area...Add to that the region’s employment prospects, inexpensive housing, low taxes, relatively safe streets, recreational opportunities, and warm southwestern climate, and Las Vegas clearly has become the latest chapter in the history of Sunbelt migration" (Gottdiener, Collins, and Dickens 1999:94). Some refer to Las Vegas as the New California, as many Californians have migrated to Las Vegas to escape the rising crime rates, traffic, and congestion that Southern California exhibits. Las Vegas has also recently become a popular place for senior citizens to retire (Moehring 2000). Continued success enjoyed by the gaming, tourism, real estate, and construction industries, in addition to a favorable climate, make Las Vegas a lure
for many resident transplants from all over the country. Consequently, growth rates for the valley continue to exponentially increase; current census reports the area’s population to be almost 1.5 million residents.

One look at pictures of the city during the 1970s will reveal the city’s tremendous burst of physical growth. Up until the last thirty years or so, the city of Las Vegas began at the Strip¹ (that sits roughly in the center of the valley, running in a north to south direction), and extended just a few miles east to Boulder Highway. The completion of Interstate 15, which parallels the Strip immediately to the west, promoted growth in the western sector of the city in the 1970s through today. Simultaneously Henderson, a city that lies just southeast of Las Vegas, has exploded in population, making it Nevada’s second largest city; to the casual observer, Henderson’s city boundaries blur with those Las Vegas, creating a giant metropolis. Finally, recent development is visible in the Northwest quadrant of the valley, comprising a master-planned community called Summerlin (Moehring 2000). A bird’s eye view of the city reveals that Las Vegas sprawls in every direction in the valley, right up to the edge of the mountains.

Las Vegas’s growth trajectory has raised tensions between unabated growth and environmental sustainability. Business interests feel that development must continue in order to meet the increasing demand for housing and commercial centers due to the expected population increase. In order to protect the economy, which is almost dangerously dependent on casino-gaming, continued

¹ Las Vegas Boulevard hosts the majority of the casino hotels in the city known as the infamous “Strip.”
growth and development must occur to attract visitors, and to attract workers to run these businesses.

Scientists, environmentalists, and others warn that there is not enough water to support the continued growth in Las Vegas. "The Southwest now has the highest per capita rates of water consumption in the nation" (Futrell 2001:8). The tropical paradise that people create at resorts, shopping centers, and private homes requires massive amounts of water. And in the extreme hot summer conditions, attempts to water lawns and fill swimming pools are even more difficult due to accelerated evaporation in the intense heat. Decreasing levels at Lake Mead, the area's primary water source, and "overextended groundwater supplies found in aquifers" indicate that water availability in Las Vegas is of tremendous concern (Futrell 2001:8). The current water supply is projected to last only early into the next century, and will support a limit of two to three million total residents (Moehring 2000). City officials have begun to make plans to accrue more water to sustain the city temporarily; a more permanent solution includes acquiring more water from the Colorado River, a process "that will take officials through a messy and expensive legal maze" (McKinnon 1998).

In addition to water shortage concerns, air quality in the valley is diminishing. In 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency reported that Las Vegas had some of the highest levels of particulate matter in the air. This type of air pollution results from high winds kicking up dust and debris, and also from human-induced disturbance associated with construction and driving on unpaved roads. Those that are most effected by the high levels of particulate matter are children, the
elderly, and those with sensitive respiratory systems (United States Environmental Protection Agency 2000). Local residents often report the presence of a brown haze that hovers over the city, which sometimes dulls the view of the nearby mountains. Sprawl development patterns have increased the need for automobiles to serve as the primary mode of transportation. And as people continue to move further away from the city's "urban center," the increased commute leads to the increased use of gasoline and contributes to the diminishing air quality of the valley.

Another factor making land development unique in Nevada is the federal control of the majority of land in the state. The Bureau of Land Management owns and manages approximately 48 million acres in Nevada, or 67% of the state, leaving Nevada with the highest percent of land managed by the federal government over any other state in the country. Compared with the majority of other states whose land is state-controlled or privately owned, the process of acquiring land for development purposes is unique. In theory, this process ensures the protection of natural resources while accounting for growth and development needs of urban areas. Federal control over the majority of the land makes growth and development in Nevada different from almost every other state in the U.S.

As population continues to rapidly increase, and growth issues abound, it is imperative to take a close look at the dynamics involved with growth and development in the Las Vegas Valley. The domination of tourism over the local economy is one place to research growth patterns of Las Vegas, as the gaming
industry has significantly shaped the growth and development of the city in the last 70 years. The connection between tourism and air travel is a glaring indicator of growth.

Las Vegas Growth Through Tourism and Air Travel

Las Vegas did not originate as a gambling mecca. In the 1850s, Las Vegas was an oasis for weary Western explorers traveling between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Gold strikes in the nearby mountains surrounding the valley increased the area’s popularity and drew more settlers, and by 1905 the township of Las Vegas was established. In 1931 gambling was legalized in Nevada, and before long hotels and gambling halls sprang up around the railroad depot near what is now Fremont Street (Gottdiener et al. 1999).

During the early days, gambling halls were comprised of nothing but a few dusty tables, a bar, and free drinks. Yet, organized crime and mobsters such as Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel turned the low-rent gambling industry into a more "sophisticated" enterprise comprised of lavish hotels and resorts (Parker 1999). “By the late 1930s more than a quarter of a million tourists a year visited Las Vegas, a city with only 8,000 residents in 1940” (Gottdiener et al 1999:10).

Like many American cities, Las Vegas suffered during the depression; but thanks to federal assistance and efforts to support World War II (such as the establishment of Nellis Air Force Base in North Las Vegas), Las Vegas enjoyed incredible population growth spurts along with a surplus of investments in the casino-gaming industry during the 1940s and 1950s. Big name entrepreneurs
like Thomas Hull and R.E. Griffith began buying up property and investing in "themed resorts," such as The Frontier and the El Rancho. Organized crime influence continued to abound on the Strip with the addition of the Flamingo and the Thunderbird. Las Vegas began to achieve notoriety, and big name Hollywood stars frequented the desert oasis (Gottdiener et al. 1999). In the 1940s a prominent Nevada Senator, Pat McCarran lobbied in support of a commercial airport to serve larger aircraft coming to Las Vegas. Prior to Senator McCarran's actions, commercial airplanes shared the same runway as military planes at Nellis AFB. Las Vegas needed its own airport, and in 1947 the Clark County Public Airport was opened on the southern end of the strip. It served 35,000 passengers in its inaugural year, averaging about twelve flights per day. In 1949 it was renamed McCarran Airport thanks to the efforts of Senator McCarran to acquire large commercial carriers to the booming city. Meanwhile casino resorts continued to pop up on the Strip, largely to the efforts of Howard Hughes; the Desert Inn, the Riveria, and the Dunes were just a few of the Strip's latest additions during the 1950s (Gottdiener et al. 1999).

Almost immediately after McCarran opened, it experienced growing pains due to the enormous growth of the tourist industry. Although the majority of tourists came to Las Vegas by car, the passenger count at McCarran was steadily rising to a record 686,268 passengers in 1959 (Gottdiener et al. 1999). During that time, County Commissioners recognized the relationship between tourism and the economic growth of the city, and realized that the existing airport facility would not be able to handle the continued, expected growth. In addition, "the
introduction of jet aircraft...forced Clark County to build a larger facility” (Bubb 2001:no page number). In 1960, the citizens of Las Vegas passed a $5 million bond issue to construct a new airport terminal, which opened its doors in 1963 (Bubb 2001).

Even though McCarran was ready to serve the local industry with a brand new facility, it was already behind the times and struggling to meet the needs of the growing city. By 1960, Las Vegas had a population of over 64,000 residents who lived in a city that covered 25 square miles of the valley. In the 1960s, and continuing into the 1980s, investors like Howard Hughes and Kirk Kerkorian began corporatizing casino resorts and driving out mobster influence. Caesar’s Palace and International Hotel (today called the Las Vegas Hilton) were constructed in the mid 1960s (Bubb 2001). The casino industry enjoyed continued success, attracting millions of annual visitors and by 1977 gambling profits surpassed $1 billion (Gottdeiner et al. 1999).

To keep up with the ever-increasing tourist demand, aviation planners began working on an expansion in 1965 that included the addition of 36 gates and expansion of the main terminal at McCarran. The birth of the Boeing 727 further created the need for larger facilities. By 1974, a $30 million expansion was complete. The price for keeping up with growth was high, and was difficult to manage by the local population of 100,000 in the 1960s. Luckily, the airport was able to pay for the majority of its expenses “by leasing the gates, ticket counters, and baggage carousels to commercial airlines, as well as terminal space to
concessions (slot machines also brought in significant revenue)” (Bubb 2001: no page number).

In the 1980s, the gaming industry saw a new style of casino, the megaresort, which prompted unprecedented growth in tourism and population in Las Vegas. In 1989, Steve Wynn opened the doors to the Strip’s first megaresort, the Mirage, taking the “themed resort” concept to a new level. “Visitors enter a high-domed lobby and dense tropical ran forest, while the hotel registration desk is backgrounded by a gigantic 53-foot-long tropical fish tank... (and) featuring 3,000 rooms” (Gottdiener et al. 1999:34). A 55-foot volcano stands outside the Mirage and “erupts” every 15 minutes. Another megaresort emerged, the Excalibur, which launched a room rate war along the Strip. Over the next few years, the number of hotel rooms rose from 60,000 to 100,000. The megaresort concept grew in popularity, and by the 1990s, the Las Vegas skyline had been permanently transformed, boasting multiple hotels towering between 30 and 50 floors. By 1997, Las Vegas played host to more than 30 million tourists (Gottdiener et al. 1999). The local population doubled from 186,380 in 1985 to 368,360 in 1995 (Las Vegas Perspective 2000).

All the while, McCarran officials scrambled to develop plans to keep up with the pace of megaresort-fueled passenger activity. In 1979, they began work on “McCarran 2000,” a multi-phase plan to accommodate 20 million tourists by 2000. The initial phases of the plan included the addition of a third runway, more terminal expansion and more gates, and a new air traffic control tower. By 1980, McCarran was already serving 10 million annual passengers. The multi-phase
plan was executed during the 1980s, and McCarran added a fourth runway, an international terminal, and a charter terminal just in time as McCarran surpassed the 30-million passenger count in 2000 (Bubb 2001).

A New Airport: Costs and Benefits

Today, Las Vegas is the fastest growing city in the nation. “Every nine minutes, someone moves to Las Vegas...They come here on the promise of a vibrant job market, a low cost of living and abundant land” (McKinnon 1998). There is no doubt that the growth of the city of Las Vegas is directly linked to tourism. Growth continues to be a significant issue, just as it was in the early days. However, times have changed; in the early days city growth was widely celebrated. Today, an emerging debate associated with growth has increased in intensity. Environmentalists, lay citizens, and others have begun to raise issue with elected leaders' continued support of growth mentalities.

In the contexts of these debates, I will lay the theoretical foundation with which to examine the political decision-making process of a proposed airport to be built approximately twenty miles south of Las Vegas. The Ivanpah airport, named after the valley in which it is located, will be built between the small highway towns of Jean and Primm, and will occupy approximately 6,500 acres of land along Interstate 15. The rationale behind its construction is to supplement passenger traffic for McCarran Airport, which is expected to reach maximum capacity by 2010. It will also serve as a primary hub for domestic and international freight transportation.
The decision to build the Ivanpah airport is critical, and is now the subject of some debate. On one side, Clark County Aviation officials warn that McCarran Airport will not be able to handle the projected increasing number of tourists that visit the city each year. Some economic and political officials argue that without the new airport, economic stagnation is inevitable for the Las Vegas Valley. Tourism is the lifeblood of Las Vegas commerce. An increase in the number of tourists results in more revenue for a variety of tourist business, including megaresorts, hotels, casinos, and restaurants. As the tourist industry grows, so does the demand for more employees to staff these businesses. As a result, more people move to the city, creating more business for real estate, contractors, schools, shopping centers, and public services. The ultimate result of the growing tourist industry is a thriving local economy, whose tax base expands in synchronicity with the business sector. Because tourism is partially dependent on McCarran International Airport, and McCarran is reaching its maximum limit for passenger capacity and physical expansion, it is imperative to examine the possibility of building a reliever airport.

On the other side of the Ivanpah airport debate is a concern with environmental quality, urban sprawl, and development. Of immediate attention is the Mojave National Preserve that neighbors the proposed airport development site. Its 1.6 million acres is home to nearly 300 species of animals, such as bighorn sheep, coyotes, mule deer, and desert tortoise. Almost fifty percent of the park is wilderness area, creating one of the largest areas of natural quiet, and offering solitude to thousands of annual visitors. Environmentalists (such as
Sierra Club and National Parks Conservation Association) and park supporters are concerned that the airport will significantly impact the Mojave National Preserve’s fragile landscape. They fear that noise from low-flying aircraft will adversely affect the area’s natural habitat, and interfere with the serenity of the visitor experience. In addition, the area will likely experience increased traffic congestion on I-15 that runs adjacent to the preserve. Finally, the airport will create light pollution that will prevent visitors from ability to appreciate the night sky, a rare sight in many southwest urban centers.

Not only is there concern about the airport’s impact on the Mojave National Preserve, but the airport will contribute to urban sprawl development along the I-15 corridor. The Ivanpah Valley is presently a rural desert landscape, which will likely become a booming southern extension of metropolitan Las Vegas. One issue concerns the location of housing, schools, and commercial centers, and how much of the desert will be built up and paved over. Neighboring rural towns, such as Goodsprings and Sandy Valley, will no longer enjoy the rural lifestyle they are accustomed too. They will likely experience increased traffic around their communities, and population growth within the towns themselves. Some airport employees may appreciate the benefits of living in Goodsprings and Sandy Valley, and they will be attracted to the quiet serenity that these towns offer. Consequently, many of these local residents have real concerns about the impact of the Ivanpah airport on their locale.
The Argument

The debate associated with the Ivanpah Valley airport points to the significance of the airport's potential impacts on this contested region. But, there is a compelling note regarding the process of acquiring the 6,500 acres needed for the airport. As I will show, the normal process of land release was never followed in the development of the Ivanpah Valley airport. In an attempt to avoid public awareness and debate over the proposal, the standard process was circumvented for a more streamlined, covert approach. Congress mandated that the Bureau of Land Management release their control and sell the land to the county government for the airport's development. This step circumvented some of the usual and customary land acquisition processes, including the consideration of citizen input. It was a premeditated decision, and made on the basis of preventing public outcry from interfering with the airport's plans.

The only players involved in the decision to build the airport, and in the location decision, are state actors. Corporations, interest groups, and the general public were not visibly involved in a decision that has the potential to shape growth and development in the Las Vegas Valley for the next century. Not only were state actors the only ones in the decision process, some of the influential state actors involved were not elected officials (e.g., the Department of Aviation). The public sector had little to no input in the decision to build the Ivanpah airport, which is surprising given the breadth of the development, and its potential impacts on not only on the immediate area surrounding the airport, but
on the entire Las Vegas Valley and even further into the southwest region at large.

Key issues regarding the airport's development process are power, political process, and democracy. The decision to build a new airport was never presented to the general public in a forum for consideration, questions, and dialogue. The question has never been to build or not; instead, state experts forged ahead with the idea to build an airport, without much public notoriety. Democratic norms suggest that public projects with such potential to impact public lives should be put through a process of consideration, in which citizens have some role in the decision. Should these types of decisions be offered to the public for consideration? Or should citizens trust that state officials make the best decision for the equal benefit of all? Who participated in the decision to build the Ivanpah Valley airport? What did this process look like? Finally, who benefits from this decision?

To answer these questions, I analyze the development of the Ivanpah airport, from its conceptual beginnings when county aviation officials first came up with the idea, through the process of obtaining the land to support the new airport, and through the congressional legislation that ultimately allowed for the county to acquire the land needed. The Ivanpah Valley airport has not yet been built. Currently, officials are working on various feasibility studies, which will eventually include an environmental impact study before construction can begin. Yet, even though there are no physical indications of the airport's existence, already there
are many indicators that provide insight as to how a large land development, such as the Ivanpah Valley airport, occurs.

In the next chapter, I discuss three theoretical approaches informing this research, pluralism, class-based theory, and state-centered theory. Each of these examine the policy making process, and contain certain assumptions about community power, specifically who holds it, how it is wielded, and who benefits. Although there are those who have discarded these theories in favor of explanations inspired by postmodernism and cultural influence, I argue that the former theories offer a specific, first-level explanation of community power structures. Upon this, other approaches, such as globalization and new social movement, can contribute, thus building a broader level of explanation.

In chapter three, I describe my methodological approach to this study, which is informed by methods incorporated by each of the theoretical approaches. I argue that class-based methodological approaches are not as appropriate for this research as methods employed by pluralists and state-centered theorists. I utilized a case study approach, as it is a common method of analyzing community power relationships in the context of these theories.

Data analysis begins in chapter four, where I chronologically outline the process that resulted in the decision to build the Ivanpah airport, and where to locate it. I will identify those that were involved in this crucial decision, mainly the Clark County Department of Aviation and the Clark County Board of County Commission. I will describe their roles, and argue that the organizational structure of these agencies allowed for them to define the need and to set the
agenda for a new airport, and where to locate it, autonomously, without input from the public or any outside interest groups.

I will continue along these lines in chapter five, beginning with a discussion of how land becomes available for development in Nevada through the administrative functions of the Bureau of Land Management. Yet, the Department of Aviation decided not to follow this route; instead, they decided to pursue legislation to obtain the land for the new airport. In doing so, certain mechanisms for citizen input were made exempt in the process. I will describe this process and argue that the Department of Aviation exercised power utilizing what I call the “end around” approach to acquire land for the Ivanpah airport.

Chapter six provides the story of the congressional legislation that made it possible for the Department of Aviation to acquire the land for their new airport. I will detail the events of the two congressional sessions and describe amendments to the legislation that resulted from outside interest groups that lobbied for their interests. For the first time in the Ivanpah story, the public had a say and some influence in the legislation; therefore, it can be argued that there exists some pluralistic tendencies. However, the concessions that were made were minimal, and I argue that in the end, the state ultimately wins. The legislation passes, and the Department of Aviation is allowed the 6,500 acres it needs from the Bureau of Land Management. The state’s organizational structure and the “end around” approach are the mechanisms of power the state utilized to achieve success in its efforts.
In Chapter seven, I present conclusions found in this research by highlighting the applicability of the state-centered model to the Ivanpah case study. I will recapitulate the analytical points made in this thesis that support a state-centered approach to power. I will address the pluralistic components that emerged during the Ivanpah legislation in greater detail, noting that the point at which analysis begins is a significant methodological issue in conducting case studies. Additionally, pluralistic aspects do exist to a certain degree; yet, they are not a pure manifestation of pluralism. I will conclude the thesis by discussing how the evidence in the Ivanpah case study contributes to our understanding of democracy and citizen participatory processes in southern Nevada.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL MODELS

The theoretical precepts informing this research are drawn from pluralism, state-centered theory, and class-based theories on power and political process. I will begin by discussing the rationale for incorporating a socio-political approach to the study, then follow with an explanation of pluralism, state-centered theory, and class-based theory. I will highlight each theory's assumptions about power relations, specifically regarding who holds the power in political decision-making, how it is wielded, and who benefits. I will discuss the most recent research contributing to the debate between pluralism, state-centered theory, and class-based theory. Finally, I will conclude with a brief summary of each perspective and forecast for the reader what the Ivanpah Valley airport study will reveal.

Land Development in the Socio-Political Context

Land development occurs in a socio-political context. Land development patterns impact the physical environment, shape economic forces, and dictate standards of living. Development involves government players, private interests, and administrative processes that involve power and authority. Small land use changes, such as zoning shifts, are useful for analyzing land development decisions, but do not involve the variety of players or the widespread effects as
larger developments do. Large developments (e.g., subdivisions, shopping malls, stadiums, and airports) generally have greater influence over community/urban development patterns. They are useful for sociological analysis because they typically involve a variety of political players, power relations, and they affect many people.

Financial, business, political, environmental, and public interests are often in conflict over development needs, benefits, and consequences. These groups sometimes have differing values and perspectives regarding development. Decision outcomes involve the exercise of some form of power. Knowledge of the character and utilization of power in land development is important sociologically. Manifestations of power illustrate differences in ability to influence and shape policy decisions and community development. They also provide some insight as to who ultimately benefits from these types of land use decisions.

This research draws from three perspectives in political sociology that contribute to our understanding of power in political decision-making processes: pluralism, state-centered theory, and class-based theory. These theories were a source of some sociological debate starting in the 1950s. They pose important sociological questions pertaining to land development in this case. They push one to identify who has ultimate power in political decisions, how it is wielded, and who benefits most. They also raise questions about democracy and citizen involvement in political processes.
Many scholars have utilized these approaches to generate questions about power in policy development. Typically, findings have addressed macro-issues of political power and control in society, based upon research at the federal or national level (see Nordlinger 1981; Block 1987; Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol 1988; Finegold and Skocpol 1995). Other research has been used to analyze power within local politics (Lynd and Lynd 1929 and 1937; Hunter 1953; Dahl 1961; Whitt 1982). However, these theories have never been used to investigate land development decisions. I use these perspectives to address regional power and process using the case of the Ivanpah airport development. Case studies such as this one are very useful for contributing to the sociological literature on local decision-making processes. In particular, this case serves to elaborate mechanisms used to wield power over policy outcomes.

Power

Power is a term often used, but it is seldom given an exact definition (Charon 2002). In political sociology, researchers have attempted to measure power manifested in community settings. Political sociologists seek to understand who holds the power, how it is attained, and how it is wielded. However, efforts to pinpoint the locus of power have produced contradictory results (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). Pluralist, state-centered, and class-based theories all have differing conceptualizations of power, who holds it, and how it is obtained. When looking past the theoretical arguments to the methods employed, one finds that each camp studies community power using differing methodological approaches.
In doing so, different approaches result in differing conceptions of power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). I will save discussion of the methodological nuances within each perspective for the methods chapter of this analysis.

Lukes (1974) provides a useful definition of power, dividing the concept into three dimensions. The first dimension of power refers to the extent in which an individual or group is able to achieve a desired end, "over which there is an observable conflict of...interests" (p. 15). The second dimension of power "assumes hierarchical relationships between different social groups" (Faulks 2000). These groups use their power and authority to set the agenda, which is an effort to prevent potential issues from becoming actual issues (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974). Finally, the third dimension of power includes the properties of the second, but also includes a hegemonic ideology, whereby dominant groups create a type of "false consciousness' amongst the powerless, who come to identify with and support what may in reality be the exact opposite of their true interests" (Faulks 2000:15).

Traces of Lukes' dimensions of power are within each theoretical (pluralist, state-centered, and class-based) perspective. Lukes (1974) himself refers to pluralism as an example of the first dimension of power. State-centered and class-based conceptions of power somewhat resemble the second dimension. The third dimension sets power in a wider context and involves the dynamic of power between the decision-makers and the constituents; class-based theories operate to some degree at this level as well.
Pluralist Theory

Pluralists argue that power is conceivably available to everyone, rather than being contained in one primary interest group. Dahl (1957) used the terms power and influence interchangeably. He defined power as “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (pp. 202-3). Essentially, pluralists believe that everyone has the ability to influence policy outcomes that impact their lives, and they reject the assumption that one particular group holds the power in a society. An interest group may achieve a desired outcome in one policy decision, and then lose on another one. The power is shared by many; not concentrated in one group. The pluralist definition of power is deterministic, and it is measured in the outcomes of conflicting interests (i.e. the successful attempts to influence political action) (Alford and Friedland 1985). Those who are successful in an initiative, or in moving someone in a desired direction, can be described as having actual power (Charon 2002). The presence of observable competing interest groups is a key element in pluralism, and is a way of maintaining balance on issues. Ideally, pluralism ensures equal representation and consideration of issues, and prevents any one group from attaining too much power. It is a liberal and democratic perception of political power.

Robert Dahl’s (1961) investigation of community power in New Haven, Connecticut provided the foundation for the pluralist perspective on political power. He began his study by asking who governs; he found that not one group (social or economic) appeared to dominate in public issues. In fact, he found that
a variety of community groups were influential in policy issues. Dahl recognized that there are inequalities in possession of resources, such as finances, knowledge, or political resources. However, "dispersed inequalities in political resources" indicate diversified access and ability to influence policy that is indicative of pluralism (Dahl 1961:228). When one group has a concentration of one resource, it is often lacking in other resources.

Pluralists argue that in a democracy, everyone has an equal chance to express their preferences according to issue, individually or collectively in a group. In addition, everyone has the right to have those preferences considered equally by a government that assumes a neutral, mediator role. The appropriate question is not who governs but, assuming that it is not one person who rules in every political decision, does anybody govern (Polsby 1960)? For the pluralists, power moves freely between competing individuals and interest groups never resting in the hands of a select few. Power is not connected with people; it is tied to issues. Although these "issues (may) be fleeting or persistent" (Polsby 1995:10), pluralism rests on the existence of competing interest groups who negotiate their interests. The practice of negotiating interests establishes power and decision-making processes in a democratic society.

Because everyone is capable of exercising influence, a pluralistic forum of governance requires that citizens join interest groups to advance their issues. The pluralist perspective presumes that citizens involve themselves in the political process by doing more than just voting (Laird 1993). Participation takes many forms: voting, social movements, interest groups, and other public forums.
Pluralists regard riots and rebellions as deviant forms of political expression. Although people may have differing access to political resources, Alford and Friedland (1985) cite Dahl who wrote, "lack of wealth can be compensated for by time, energy, political skills, or popularity" (p. 84). Power manifests in conflicts within political arenas, in the persuasion of leaders by opinion, and in voting. These mechanisms of political influence rely on the existence of a government that implements the wishes of groups successfully lobbying their interests (Laird 1993).

Pluralism can only exist in a democratic system (Dahl 1961). It requires an environment that is similar to a free market—everyone has equal access, resulting “in the greatest good for the greatest number” (Goertzel 1976:33). Pluralists recognize that there are class differences among individuals, but presume that pluralism does not serve the interests of just one class or interest group, such as business interests. A pluralist form of government serves the interests of all groups, and so, capitalism, democracy, and pluralism are ideologically linked. Because of the equal opportunity to pursue interests, in a pluralistic society, everybody potentially benefits.

If the pluralist conceptions hold, I should find in this case various interest groups competing to express their views and exercising some influence over the Ivanpah Valley airport development. These interest groups will utilize public and private lobbying to exercise power over the project. I will expect an ostensibly neutral government to encourage expression of these interests and to mediate among them in order to address a full range of social, economic, and
environmental issues. The goal is to ensure that the airport development is in the best interests of everyone, where no group has disproportionate power to get their way.

State-Centered Theory

The state-centered perspective suggests that power lies in the state. Power is derived “from the organization of authority in which decisions are made” (Alford and Friedland 1985:169). The level of analysis is the state's structure, and power is measured in the domination of state agencies over private interests (Alford and Friedland 1985). The state-centered concept of power is in contrast to pluralism, which defines power as one entity having force over another. Instead, state-centered theorists tend to avoid exact definitions of power, and focus on the state's organizational structure and its actors' role that allow favorable decisions and outcomes that are in the state's interests. The state's legitimacy and authority allow for, and serve to perpetuate, its powerful position and status. State-centered theorists recognize that state actors tend to dominate policy making to pursue (and protect) their own interests, especially since political actors have the greatest access to policy making (Krasner 1984). Thus, the state is another actor expressing its own interests, rather than acting as a neutral arbitrator. State-centered theorists critique pluralism for viewing the state as one interest group lobbying for their issues and denying their administrative, even coercive power (Skocpol 1995). Because the state is the key concept with this theory, but has many connotations, a brief discussion of it is necessary.
Skocpol (1995) incorporated Weberian concepts in her description of the state: "...states are compulsory associations claiming control over territories and the people within them. Administrative, legal, extractive, and coercive organizations are the core of any state" (p. 92). She often refers to state actors as "managers" who serve to perpetuate their position that enables the state to exercise power in political decision-making. Nordlinger (1981) concurs, saying that the state managers' role is to authorize and make decisions that are binding within society.

State-centered theory is most associated with the work of Theda Skocpol. Finegold and Skocpol (1995) in their historical study of New Deal politics note that, "individuals are influenced by their institutional positions and opportunities; they are not simply atomized beings with performed preferences" (p. 155). They argue that the organization of state and party systems were responsible for government programs during the New Deal. Not only did this organization influence New Deal politics in the 1930s, but also the state's organization continues to influence "political alliances, policy formulation, and the consequences of administrative interventions in the economy" even today (p. 3).

State autonomy is an overarching theme among state-centered theorists. Theda Skocpol (1995) described state autonomy as a state that operates independent of outside influence from interest groups. True state autonomy, according to Nordlinger (1981) is a state that acts in such a way that may, or may not, coincide with societal or economic interests. An autonomous state whose interests are parallel to societal or economic interests is significant; yet, a state
that acts against the interests of society or the dominant economic class is autonomous to an even greater degree.

In the state-centered world-view, there are three aspects of the state that allow for control over political decision-making: 1) state actors and agencies; 2) the state's organizational structure; and, 3) state-centered ideologies. The state is the fundamental structure that maintains the organization of society by emphasizing "rule and control" rather than allocation, (and considering) the state as a powerful actor in its own right" (Alford and Friedland 1985:161). Those who occupy state positions have been authorized to make and execute decisions that are binding within society (Nordlinger 1981). State actors' authority is achieved through legitimacy in a democratic state (Faulks 1999). This component of state control over the policy process emphasizes the authority given to an individual or agency within the state.

Another aspect of state control over policy concerns the state's organizational structure, which may result from its organizational capacities, and/or competition between state agencies. Organizational capacities refer to a stable administrative-military system that has the financial resources and skilled personnel to execute policy and control (Skocpol 1995). Capacities are organizational resources employed by the state to carry out its purpose. Additionally, state agencies sometimes compete with each other for their own share of power and influence, which can result in shifts in power and control within the state, or in the most extreme case, revolution (Alford and Friedland 1985).
Finally, state ideologies serve to perpetuate the state's power and control over society. The purpose of the state is to maintain social order and to design social policy (Skocpol 1995). The state's overall international focus, their concern for maintaining social order, and their organizational structure enable it to pursue its own interests, autonomously, aside from outside influence (such as corporate interests, political allies, citizen input, etc.). However, this is not to say that the state acts only in its own interests, while ignoring interest groups. The state is concerned with "the public good", and it uses its resources to diagnose problems and to develop policy that addresses social problems. State managers may utilize consultants to design programs that meet the needs of society, which also keep the disenfranchised "at bay," so to speak. Therefore, on one level social policy is designed to serve the constituents; but, it is also utilized to maintain social order, thus perpetuating the state's powerful, autonomous status.

The state-centered perspective on democracy, according to Alford and Friedland (1985), is a "legitimacy of elite control;" a fictitious idea where citizens believe they have a voice, when in fact, they do not (p. 250). Democracy is a method of selecting leaders, and for building a structure—not a decision outcome, as in the pluralist perspective. It is a way of legitimizing political leaders' control of policy making. The American democratic ideal maintains provisions for public input, such as elections, public meetings, and written correspondence; citizens are strongly encouraged to utilize these avenues. Yet in the state-centered worldview, this mode of participation is a mere bureaucratic
hurdle. Therefore democracy, as defined by citizen participation in policy making, is nonexistent in the state-centered perspective.

The state’s organizational power dictates who benefits and who loses. In contrast to the pluralists, who suggest that everyone benefits from the system of competing interests, state-centered theorists do not necessarily focus on individuals who may benefit. Instead, they emphasize the state’s structure and organization; in turn, those that embody the state are the ones that benefit. Thomas Dye (1995) wrote that power is not an individual characteristic within the state-centered society. Power is an attribute of the roles in a particular social system, and is only enjoyed by those who occupy positions of authority in large institutions. Institutions are powerful, not individuals; institutions benefit more so than do individuals.

If the state-centered perspective best describes the Ivanpah case, I will determine that state agencies are the dominant actor in this development. I will identify autonomous state actors utilizing their position within the local government and their legitimate power to influence the project. These practices will serve to support the status quo of the state and/or to benefit the state more than any other group. Further, the state's organizational structure will influence the nature of the decision-making. Finally, state-centered ideologies will be apparent in the motivations of state actors.
Class-Based Theory

In the class-based worldview, economic interests have the most influence over the political sector. The class-based conception of power is different from both pluralists and state-centered conceptions. Recall that pluralists define power as one entity having force over another, and state-centered theorists avoid definitions of power by identifying structures that perpetuate status and authority. In contrast, class-based theorists base the concept of power on Marxian relations regarding the means of production (Faulks 2000; Nash 2000). Those that own the means of production are the most powerful in a given society, even more powerful than the state or the military. Those that own the means of production utilize financial resources to influence political outcomes. Therefore, power is systemic, and is measured by the existence of the exploitive nature of the capitalist class over the proletariat (Alford and Friedland 1985). Power is systemic because society itself operates in support of the highest economic class. This situation occurs because the economy is dependent upon capitalism, which in turn requires workers to sell their labor to produce commodities, and owners to control the means of production. The result is a division of labor and a stratified class system. Therefore, power is achieved directly by economic gains, and indirectly by a society that supports capitalism, making the study of who has power and how it is obtained focused on the larger system in which the power exists.

Floyd Hunter (1953) questioned a panel of people in Atlanta, Georgia who were most knowledgeable about the city, to identify the top leaders of
organizations and corporations. He then interviewed those leaders, and found that no one person or organization held the majority of the power, but that many of the identified people are professionally, civically, and socially linked. Often these associations granted members the ability to discuss community matters and make decisions in one or all of these settings. He revealed that political ideas and decisions are made informally and not in the public arena (Hunter 1953).

Hunter's research stands as one of the first community power studies that was not in support of pluralism; instead, it more closely resembled Marxian ideology, where wealth, class, and status have significant influence in the political sector. With the work of Hunter, an emerging power perspective based on the relations between economic status and political power began to emerge, the class-based perspective.

Domhoff’s (1983) research suggested that, "there is a social upper class in the United States that is a ruling class by virtue of its dominant role in the economy and government" (p. 1). Borrowing C. Wright Mills’ (1956) concept, "power elite," Domhoff (1983) referred to those who occupy positions within organizations and institutions that make decisions to enhance their own social positions, and who possess highly valued resources. Domhoff and other class-based theorists regard CEOs, corporate executives, think tank administrators, and other individuals who occupy prestigious as the most influential force in political decision-making processes. These individuals also belong to, and financially support, foundations and institutions whose purpose is to support the
status enjoyed by the economic class. Using network analysis, Domhoff (1996) identified relationships within and between influential organizations, and then postulated, "social cohesion facilitates policy cohesion within the upper class" (p. 22). Thus, within the class-based perspective, the focus of analysis is the relationship between economic and political influence.

Studies conducted by Lynd and Lynd (1929 and 1937), Mills (1956), and Hunter (1953) demonstrate power elites' role in decision-making processes, their interconnectedness, and their influence on political and social decisions. With the class-based perspective, mechanisms for wielding power and influence over public policy center around access to economic resources. The power elite has their own ability and mechanisms to influence political decisions (e.g., legitimizing "expert" opinions, press releases). In addition to tailoring research institutes and fueling conservative think tanks, one of the ways power and influence are most heavily exercised is providing financial backing for initiatives and providing free services and exchanges for organizations (Domhoff 1983).

Domhoff (1983) has strong suggestions as to who ultimately benefits from political decisions made within the context of the class-based perspective, the "power elite." Political decision outcomes tend to favor the dominant, economic class. State-centered theorists would argue that because state managers exercise political power and authority, the state tends to benefit in decision-outcomes. The state makes and executes political decisions, but class-based theorists acknowledge the iterative, and profitable, relationship between the corporate class and the political force. Although many government officials may
not have direct ownership of valued commodities, their position gives them increased power and access to policy decisions. Some elite theorists (Pareto 1935; Mosca 1939; Mills 1956) include political officials within the power elite category. Whether they too belong to the "power elite" circle is debatable. Nonetheless, in the class-based worldview, regardless of the amount of political power or stronghold on a public issue, the dominant economic class benefits the most in decision outcomes.

If class-based indicators are present in the Ivanpah case, they will reveal a business group or economic class wielding the most influence over the airport's development. Tactics employed by economic interests may, or may not, be overt, but will likely involve some form of financial incentives. The end decision to construct the airport will disproportionately benefit economic interests over any other group.

Having described each of the three theoretical approaches to power, I will discuss the recent trends in political sociology. In the mid-1980s, Skocpol's Weberian approach dominated the field, and the height of the debate between state-centered and class-based perspectives occurred in the early to mid-1990s. Since that time however, research on policy making has been on the decline, thus producing a gap in the literature. Emerging postmodern1 themes in

1Postmodernism questions "truth" claims (both sociological and scientific), and it emphasizes the role of discourse, social and historical construction of reality, and a shift toward a decentralized society that contributes to our understanding of the social world (Nash 2000).
sociology have partially contributed to researchers de-emphasizing the role of interest groups, class, and politics in conceptions of power. Today, many political sociologists favor new explanations that stem from the postmodern tradition. Globalization\(^2\) and new social movements\(^3\) are some of the more recent approaches to power and politics (Nash 2000). Contemporary political sociologists suggest that these approaches do not negate the importance of the state. Instead, the state must be considered in a collection of several cultural processes (such as ethnicity and tradition). Moreover, "the state has to be understood in relation to the associations of civil society and in the context of processes of social change occurring within and beyond its own boundaries" (Faulks 2000:212). Faulks contends that focus on the state still useful in political sociology; yet, the state must be understood in the context within a cultural and global society that acts upon and continuously redefines the state.

\(^2\)Globalization may be defined as "increasing global interconnectedness...(which) involves the flows of goods, capital, people, information, ideas, images, and risks across national borders" (Nash 2000:47). Also see Faulks (2000) for a discussion on globalization.

\(^3\)New social movements are concerned with culture at work in social processes. New social movements take advantage of political opportunities (such as changes in consumption patterns or new policy changes) to promote political change and recognition of cultural identity (Melucci 1996; Hamel and Maheu 2000).
Despite the growing popularity of alternative explanations of power and politics, I argue that pluralism, state-centered theory, and class-based theory are still relevant to understand public policy-making. They offer concrete, empirical questions about who rules, and how, in political processes, how political decisions are made, and who benefits from the decision outcomes. These theories are particularly useful for research at the community level. Once these questions are answered, I suggest that explanations from globalization and new social movements scholars can set these processes in a wider context. The insights that these approaches provide can be helpful in developing a rich understanding of a community setting as it is shaped by national and international forces, including important cultural and social factors. However, that is more than this thesis attempts to do. I use these traditional political theories of power because they are helpful for understanding power and its effects at the community level, and for understanding these issues in a way that could help contribute to real social change.

Even though the popularity of traditional approaches has decreased, there are some researchers who have continued asking questions about who rules in a community setting. I will now highlight some of this recent research in political sociology that seeks to explain community power relations.

Recent Case-Study Research

J. Allen Whitt (1982) conducted a comparative study on urban transportation development decisions in San Francisco, comparing pluralist, elitist, and class-
dialectic\(^4\) models of explanation. Whitt contends that neither the elitist nor the pluralist perspective offers an adequate explanation for the political process involved in decision-making. He suggested that while corporate/elites have been a driving force in political decisions, he could not conclude that these entities are the only force behind these decisions. Wolman and Spitzley (1996) agree, noting that while some of the literature suggests that big business dominates policy decision, other literature states business does have influence, but not to the extent that is described by elite theorists.

Whitt (1982) suggested that even though one cannot say that elites wholly dominate the political process, the pluralist model does not adequately explain the process either. He argued that pluralist theory often ignores the bonds elites share. "Businessmen collectively constitute the most class-conscious group in American society...they are the most highly organized, more easily mobilized, have more facilities for communication, are more like-minded...than any other

\[^4\text{The elitist model used by Whitt is based on the work of Mills and Hunter. He characterizes political power as dominated by elite interests (as in the Millsian "power elite"), where the state has little autonomy. Decision outcomes within Whitt's elitist model benefit the homogenous elite. Whitt's class-dialectic model is informed by the work of Milliband and James O'Connor. The basis for understanding political power is through societal class relations, especially revolving around control over the means of production (similar to the class-based approach). In this model, the dominant class agenda is supported in political decision outcomes.}\]
Finally, Whitt argued that both the elitist and pluralist models are ahistorical. He suggested that research on the political process should include historical factors, the role of social institutions, and environmental factors, which also affect how a decision is played out. He concluded that the class-dialectic model addresses these aspects, and serves as the exemplar for executing political research.

Kleniewski (1987), in her analysis of Philadelphia, examined urban renewal programs, and whether they were the product of a political elite or an economic elite. In addition, she wanted to know if the urban business leaders supported the campaign in its entirety, or was support more fragmented. Kleniewski concluded that neither political elites nor economic elites served as the impetus for urban renewal in Philadelphia, rather “the two sets of interests and actors were closely interrelated in a pro-growth coalition” (1987:50). She said that the line between political and economic elites is too rigid a distinction. She also found that, “although the business community was internally divided over urban renewal, it developed its own mechanism for resolving conflict. An inner circle...emerged in the local business community and successfully guided urban renewal through the political process” (1987:50). The inner circle finding is similar to class-based assumptions; yet, identifying the strict distinction between political and economic interests contributes to the understanding of political power by recognizing their iterative, not separate, relationship.

Deborah Perkins (2000) recently conducted a case study on the economic development patterns of a rural county in Tennessee to determine if these
patterns provide insight to power relations, the role of the state, and also local resistance. Like Kleniewski, she also found that the state serves to protect and legitimize the interests of the dominant economic class as evidenced by both political and economic elites controlling the county’s development. Perkins also discovered that verbalized citizen grievances have led to a situation where the local polity recognized and addressed their issues. Thus, there is some degree of citizen outcry having impact on their local economic development. In Perkins’ case, class-based theory seems to be the prevailing explanatory theory, yet citizen objection having impact supports some pluralist assumptions.

Similar to the findings of these studies, the Ivanpah case study will reveal that not one perspective completely depicts political power in land development decisions. I argue that while aspects of state-centered theory are most important for understanding this case, some pluralistic tendencies also emerge as the development progresses. Additionally, even though the evidence in the Ivanpah case does not reveal an explicit economic interest group attempting to influence the decision outcome, class-based influences and benefits are implicit in this case.

Conclusion

To summarize, each of the three theoretical perspectives differ in their answers to the question who rules in terms of influencing political decision-making. The pluralists contend that everyone has equal opportunity to express their views and exercise influence in the political arena; therefore, the public
rules. In contrast, the state-centered assumption posits that the state is the dominant player involved in public policy; therefore, the state rules. Still different is the class-based perspective which identifies the power elite, or the dominant economic class as those who exercise the most authority in political decision-making; consequently, the power elite rules.

Power resides in different domains for each of the three perspectives and therefore, the mechanisms for political control are also different. The pluralists stress participation in the political system as the chief means of exercising power. State-centered theorists contend that state actors, the state’s organizational structure, and state-centered ideology lend itself to maintaining the state’s level of power. Finally, class-based theorists illuminate a number of ways elites dominate political decision-making processes (e.g., campaign contributions, favors and exchanges, sitting on decision-making boards, etc.).

Each perspective differs regarding who benefits from the existing power structure. Pluralists argue that the existence of competing interest groups moderated by a neutral government means that everyone benefits. State-centered theorists suggest those who occupy state roles are the ones that benefit most. And class-based theorists contend that the power elite tends to disproportionately benefit more from the established power structure than anyone else.

Finally, it is also relevant to compare public influence in political process among the three perspectives, as it contributes to our understanding of the balance of political power. Pluralists argue that if citizens join groups to pursue
their interests, they would have direct access to provide their input regarding policy decisions. Some state-centered theorists (Skocpol) suggest that even though the state generally governs in its own interests, it must also listen to the interests of private citizens who elect state officials into office. However, other analysts, such as Alford and Friedland, argue that the voting system is a charade, and regardless of outcomes encountered through voting, the structure of the state generally protects itself from decisions that may adversely affect the status quo. Finally, class-based theorists require clarification regarding exactly which citizens have input. Those citizens that possess economic or political resources, and/or those that occupy position of decision-making authority have direct input on policy decision. However, this group is more representative of class interests; the vast majority of citizens does not enjoy these privileged positions and therefore do not have the opportunity to provide input on decisions that affect their lives. Each perspective has differing perceptions about power structures, and the mechanisms for maintaining control.

This study presents an opportunity to explore the power assumptions in these theories and the mechanisms by which power is wielded on the local level in southern Nevada. Each theory remains a potential explanation for land development processes involved in the Ivanpah airport project. If the pluralist perspective proves to be the most relevant explanation, then the evidence will reveal a variety of citizen, government, and other interest groups lobbying for impact upon the initial decision to build the Ivanpah airport, as well as within the legislation. Within this situation exists a neutral government acting as mediator.
between competing interests, and in the end, everyone will benefit equally from the development. If the state-centered theory holds water, the decision to build the airport and the legislative process will be dominated by an autonomous state, where outside interest groups will have virtually no impact. The eventual outcome will be one that benefits state (governing body) players and agencies. Finally, if the class-based theory best applies to the Ivanpah case, it will be clear that the decision to build the airport, and the entire legislative process will be heavily influenced by business interests. Corporate actors will be observed as they network with each other, away from public scrutiny, and assist in financial support of the airport's development. And in the end, it will be revealed that the corporate sector benefits far greater from the airport's construction than any other entity.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will describe the methods utilized in this study. I will discuss the usefulness of the case-study approach to analyze political power, and detail the tools used to examine the Ivanpah airport development. Because I based my research design on the methodological assumptions associated with pluralism, state-centered theory, and class-based theory, I will spend the second half of this chapter identifying the distinctions that exist within each of these perspectives. Fundamental empirical questions are shared by each assumption, yet the method of exploring these questions is at times different. I will describe the techniques associated with the class-based approach, which I do not use because my evidence does not reveal overt actions of economic actors. Even so, this fact does not negate the economic influence present in this case. However, the methods utilized by pluralists and state-centered theorists are more useful for this study, and I will describe these in detail. I will end with a brief synopsis of the arguments made in this chapter.

The Case Study Approach

Orum (1987) conducted a historical analysis of Austin, Texas to explain the city’s politics that uphold growth ideologies. His main empirical question was,
"Why did Austin grow?" Orum argued that when examining how a city has grown, one must also ask, "Who founded the city? Who made the key decisions that promoted the growth of the city? What kinds of battles ensued over these decisions, and what individuals, or groups, were involved in these battles?" (p. 226). He remarked that these questions cannot be answered by a large-scale study of cities, nor will the use of surveys generate answers to these questions. He concluded that a case study analysis is useful as it generates a full description of city politics much more so than a large sample of cities.

Orum’s study is an example of how a case study is appropriate for political power research. Conceptually, Orum and I ask the same questions about political power in urban development. Questions that seek to identify the major players involved with the Ivanpah airport development, how the development came to occur, and who benefits cannot be answered with a general survey or through participant observation. As Orum discovered, the case study approach is the most appropriate tool to investigate the sociological concepts of this nature. Research questions that are specific to one case require in-depth answers that only a case study can provide.

The selection of the case is an important step in conducting research of this kind. Generally, sociologists set out to examine a case that typifies the larger society. The goal is to make generalizations about the social world, to the extent possible, based on the examination of one case. Even though the researcher may have these intentions in the selection of the case, often the case chosen for analysis is quite atypical. Something about the case caught the researcher’s
attention, and enticed the researcher to take a closer look. One might argue that selection of the case is not random, not scientific, and therefore evidence gathered cannot be generalized to the larger population (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991).

However, a unique case’s potential for lack of generalizability does not negate the research efforts. An in-depth investigation contributes to the scientific bank of knowledge. A case study, like other forms of research, identifies patterns and concepts, refines methodology, and generates theory. Whether the themes discovered are “generalizable is an empirical question that can be answered only with data from elsewhere” (Feagin, et al 1991:95). One may not be able to generalize their findings based on the evidence discovered in their own case; yet, when combined with other cases of similar nature, conclusions made about society at large are reflexive and more accurate.

This research was inspired by land development patterns in Las Vegas. Initial inquiry was based on questions such as, how does a tract of land become developed, who makes that decision, and what explains patterns of urban sprawl and leap frog development in the Las Vegas Valley? The Ivanpah Valley airport development presents an opportunity to answer these questions, and attempts to provide insight in to land development processes. No other research of this type has been conducted on this city. The case may or may not be generalizable to Las Vegas as a whole, or other U.S. cities. It is not my goal to make generalizations about land development in Las Vegas based on the evidence in the Ivanpah case. However, this analysis provides a starting point, establishes
parameters, identifies players, and contributes to a theoretical framework, from which further research regarding land development processes may be advanced.

Why choose the Ivanpah case? There are two reasons; it is a current development and its impact is widespread both geographically and socially. First, it is a current project that is still in the logistics planning stages. Gorden (1987) suggested that informants who have recently experienced the phenomenon in question, particularly events that are meaningful to the informant, have an easier time with recall that is more accurate. My empirical inquiry is informed by current or recent transactions. Those that participated in this study are still involved with the Ivanpah airport development project in one form or another, and are somewhat invested in the outcome. It is the hope that in selecting a current case, the accuracy of data is improved.

Second, the Ivanpah Valley airport development is large and affects many people. It has the potential to impact not only the people immediately involved with its construction and operations, but it will likely affect city-wide trends in population growth, development, environmental quality, and transportation patterns. It will also impact the greater travel industry, because of the city’s popularity as a tourist destination. Because of the many potential impacts of this development, and in-depth understanding of how this project came to its existence is imperative. This case presents the opportunity to examine many social and political processes in Las Vegas, including the workings of a variety of government agencies, and the actions of citizens and organized interest groups. Smaller developments do not affect as many people as a large development.
such as the Ivanpah airport, and therefore their implications are not as widespread. Whether this case proves atypical remains to be determined by future sociological inquiry into similar developments in Las Vegas and in the Southwest.

Methods

Data collection techniques in this research include the use of semistructured interviews, attendance at public meetings, and analysis of documents. To begin, I will speak to the usefulness and validity of interviews as a sociological method. The interview as a methodological tool is growing in popularity within sociology. "It has been estimated that 90 per cent of all social science investigations use interviews in one way or another" (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:113). The interview is a method of obtaining a wealth of information from an informant, and enables the researcher to seek elaboration as needed; however, due to the reflexive nature of the interview, its validity as a tool is sometimes questioned.

One issue of validity with the interview involves the nature of the interview itself. Fontana and Frey (2000) wrote that interviews are based on interactions between two individuals, the interviewer and the interviewee. The content in an interview not only reveals detailed information about a particular phenomenon, but also reveals the relationship between the individuals participating in the process. The results of the interview are often taken for granted as truth, and is hoped that the interviewer's identity does not bias the account. In my approach to these interviews, I attempted to remain a neutral investigator. I never claimed
to support one side or the other in the Ivanpah debate; nor did I use this tactic to obtain information.

Another validity issue concerns whether the informants are truthful. As Denzin (1978:121) describes, "people do not always tell the interviewers what they want to know." In most cases he is referring to those who are embarrassed, afraid, or resistant to answering interview questions. In my case, the potential threat lies in whether the information given will result in bad publicity, or perhaps loss of a job. To protect the informant, I gave participants the option of whether or not I may use their name in the research. I have kept confidential the identities of those that wished so. I hope that the information gathered is an accurate depiction of events; however, the reader must consider these validity issues while reading this analysis.

I conducted a total of 10 official interviews with individuals who were directly involved in the development of the Ivanpah Valley airport. I utilized purposive and snowball sampling techniques for identifying participants. I began by utilizing newspaper articles that identified those involved with the new airport's development (such as the Clark County Department of Aviation, the Clark County Board of County Commissioners, and the Mojave National Preserve) to seek out initial participants to be interviewed. Upon calling these agencies and explaining my task, I was connected with the person in that particular organization who was most involved with the development. Once I started interviewing these individuals, I asked them if they could refer me to someone else that might offer more insight into the process. Represented in my sample are the Clark County
Department of Aviation, Clark County Board of County Commissioners, Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning, the Bureau of Land Management, the Mojave National Preserve, congressional representatives, environmental organizations, and local citizens. These organizations represent entities directly involved with the Ivanpah airport development; my informants did not identify any other agency as a potential source of additional information.

Though this research is an attempt to identify those in the formal planning and decision-making behind the Ivanpah Valley airport, I must also note that there are participants who may have influenced the development in more informal ways. Examples include major developers and contractors, private casino interests, and other political officials not officially involved in the project but who have a vested interest in the continued expansion of the valley, which would be aided by the airport’s development. I did not include these types of individuals in my sample because the focus of my research was on those officially involved in the airport decision process.

Accessing the informants chosen for this study, or “gaining entrée” as described by Jorgensen (1989) proved to be a challenge, but was not impossible. I utilized Jorgensen’s overt approach to accessing potential participants by introducing myself as a graduate student researcher and explaining the purpose of my research. I asked for the interviewees’ permission to participate in my research and assured them of their confidentiality if they desired. Most everyone that I asked agreed to participate in the interview, and I was able to talk with a representative of almost every agency/organization that I sought out to.
However, I did have some difficulty when I sought to interview two informants representing major economic interests. The first, representing development interests in the Las Vegas Valley, was hesitant to participate. Because of his hesitancy, and because of his lack of direct involvement, I decided not to push him into participating in an interview. Additionally, I was not able to contact a representative from Dumez-GTM (an international construction firm identified as assisting in the initial airport feasibility studies) despite multiple efforts to do so.

Upon accessing informants, the format I utilized for conducting interviews was a technique that Fontana and Frey (2000) referred to as semistructured. I started out with a general idea of the questions I wanted to ask and was somewhat directive over the subject matter. Denzin (1970) also called this method the "nonscheduled standardized interview" where "the interviewer works with a fixed list of questions or problems to be covered but alters that list for each respondent...and rephrases questions for each respondent" (p. 186). I asked all participants the same basic questions, but I tailored the interview guide so that it was more personalized and relevant to the informant. Not every question is appropriate for every respondent; therefore, there are some differences between the questions used during each interview.

The sequence and content of the interview began with general questions concerning the participant’s knowledge of the Ivanpah airport development. Questions also addressed the participant’s level of involvement in the airport’s development, from its conceptual beginning to its current status, and the process by which significant decisions were made, such as how the decision was made.
that a new airport was needed, how the Ivanpah Valley location was chosen, and who was involved in these decisions. I asked questions about future stages of the development, including who would be involved and what steps have yet to be taken before construction begins. Questions also included who supported the venture and who opposed, and attempted to identify all possible participatory mechanisms available for citizens throughout the project's development. These questions cover all the areas of the Ivanpah airport development, in attempt to maximize validity (Denzin 1978). For a complete list of the specific questions refer to the appendix.

The interview style was casual, and the exchange between myself, and the participants resembled a conversation. Out of the 10 interviews I conducted, 9 of them were face-to-face interviews (the other was a phone interview). All but two of the interviews took place at the participant's place of work and lasted approximately one hour. All participants appeared to give their full attention to the questions, and there were minimal interruptions during the exercise. In fact, several interviews were held in a conference room to allow for more privacy and less distraction. The informants answered the questions freely and uninhibited. If subjects came up in which I did not have prepared interview questions, I explored these issues rather than ignore them. Denzin (1978) suggested that it is an effective method when the interviewer is ready and willing to investigate new topics that he/she had not yet considered. In turn, if the informant strayed too much from the subject during the interview, I would respectfully redirect the discussion back to my original questions.
Generally I did not have difficulty getting informants to answer the questions. However, one informant was initially skeptical. To try and overcome his reluctance, I showed him my copy of the interview questions so he could familiarize himself with it. I assured him that his participation was voluntary. He agreed to participate in the interview, but instead of me leading the interview, he held on to my copy of the questions, and addressed them one by one until he reached the end. Even though I found it amusing, I was happy that he appeared comfortable with the interview.

With the exception of one, all interviews were tape-recorded. Weiss (1994) discussed the debate on whether to tape record an interview. He noted that some arguments describe the tape recorder as an intruder. People tend to remember the machine's presence, and are sometimes timid about making comments they know will be recorded. Sometimes an interviewee may even request that the tape recorder be turned off before making a comment.

However, Weiss hailed the benefits of tape recording. Tape recording captures conversation in a way that note-taking is not able to. It is not possible to capture everything that was discussed in an interview by taking notes. In addition, tape recording captures voice tone, word emphasis, word slippage, and other "conversational spacers" (p. 54). I recognize that the kind of information given by informants may be skewed due to the presence of the tape recorder. However, because my confidentiality measures protect against the threat of revealing information, because much of the information is public knowledge, and in order to achieve accuracy in the findings, I felt that it was appropriate and
beneficial to use a tape recorder during interviews. I transcribed the interviews verbatim as quickly as possible after the interview transpired. These transcriptions allowed me to review the findings, look for patterns, generate more questions, and identify potential informants.

While the interview is a useful tool to gather information, the strength of this research is enhanced through the use of triangulation. "Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, is a plan of action that will raise sociologists above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies. By combining methods and investigators in the same study, observers can partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigator or one method" (Denzin: 1978:294). Incorporating multiple methods to study a particular phenomenon maximizes the validity of the research.

To supplement the interview data, I attended two public meetings, sponsored by the Clark County Board of County Commission, involving the citizens who live near the airport’s proposed location. The meetings were an opportunity for those involved with the airport development, such as the Department of Aviation and Clark County Comprehensive Planning, to inform local residents of the airport’s progress, and for residents to voice their concerns and give feedback. One of the meetings, the Southwest Community Forum, was held at a local casino in Jean on 11/29/01 and lasted about two hours. The other meeting I attended, the Citizen’s Advisory Council was in Sandy Valley on 12/11/01; it lasted about 45 minutes. I taped and transcribed the events of both meetings. Attending these meetings allowed me to cross check some of the facts about the Ivanpah
development that I gathered during the interviews. In addition, it gave me the opportunity to witness the actual forums for citizen participation in the development process so I could make conclusions about citizen participatory mechanisms based on what I was told in interviews, and also based on what I observed in meetings.

Finally, this research incorporates the use of document analysis. Document analysis, like attending the public meetings, allowed me to cross check what I learned in interviews, and it also supplemented the data where there were questions still unanswered. For example, some informants admitted that they couldn't remember exact dates of some events. Documents were helpful in giving me the actual dates and descriptions to create a timeline of events regarding the Ivanpah project, and it helped me to identify those people involved to interview.

I analyzed public records from the Bureau of Land Management that included minutes of meetings, interoffice memorandums, maps, and copies of testimonials and legislative decisions. A representative of the BLM office in Las Vegas allowed me to copy his file on the Ivanpah development, since it is all public record. I also utilized a website, http://thomas.gov.loc, which provides detailed summaries on legislative initiatives, including testimonies and records of decision. In addition, I reviewed agenda items regarding the Ivanpah development that came before the Board of County Commission, which are also public record. Finally, I examined dozens of newspaper articles pertaining to the Ivanpah development.
Having discussed the methods utilized in this study, I will now turn my attention toward the traditional methodological approaches to community power. I will begin with a brief discussion of the methodological assumptions concerning the locus of power that are relevant to each theoretical perspective. Next, I will describe the methods used by class-based theorists, which are not as useful for this study, then conclude by describing methods used by pluralists and state-centered theorists.

**Locus of Power**

Each of the three theoretical perspectives fueling this research asks the same root question: Who rules (Domhoff) or who governs (Dahl) and how? Power is the root issue embedded within these empirical questions. The fundamental difference between each theory is the locus of power, and the level of analysis in which to analyze power. For the pluralists, power is situational and spread evenly among competing interest groups. Whether the research involves one case study or a comparison of multiple cases, there are certain structural components present in most policy decision processes that are relevant for analysis, including the actors, the mechanisms they use to gain power in decision-making processes, and the decision outcomes. A researcher can easily identify players and their actions exhibited in a particular policy decision and follow the course of the decision from beginning to end.

State-centered theorists suggest power lies solely in the state, arguing that it is the state’s structure that perpetuates its power; therefore, the level of analysis
is the state's structure. Because the state is the focal point of analysis in this approach, researchers often begin by identifying state actors and their relationship within the organization to which they belong. It is the hope that in doing so, the state's organizational structure will reveal power relationships present in political decision outcomes. Once again, these components are easily identified within empirical evidence and serve as the basis for state-centered analysis.

The class-based theorists contend that power rests with business/corporate interests. The level of analysis for class-based theory is the systemic societal structure, particularly the relations of the means of production. Class-based theoretical analysis of power is complex. Because power lies in economic interests and with those who control the means of production, class-based inquiry covers a wide range of players whose involvement in political decisions may or may not be overt. There are some corporate players who influence political decisions, but do so out of public scrutiny and "off the record." In these circumstances, identification of involved players is much more difficult. Moreover, some business interests influence some policy decisions but not others. The researcher may rely on economic interests who have open involvement in policy decisions, reputations held by various corporate actors to identify those that participate in policy formation, or as in my case, economic interests that may not be overtly involved, but economic ideologies are detected in the policy making process.
Class-Based Methodology

To examine who rules, Domhoff (1996) conducted what he called “membership network analysis,” where he described both organizational and interpersonal relationships existing between people, groups, or entities. He traced membership in groups, noting that multiple memberships within one group reflect “connectivity” and a sense of “social cohesion” (pp. 12-13). He incorporated the use of matrices and algebra to establish large network databases to analyze thousands of organizations, and then used this information to trace the direction and the amount of money flowing between organizations. Additionally, he analyzed the “outputs” of the network, including “speeches, policy statements, and legislative acts that allow us to study the goals, values, and ideology of the people and institutions in the network” (p. 14).

While Domhoff’s ideas are logically sound, and his writings have inspired a generation of socio-political research, his methodology is potentially invalid. In order to identify social and economic elites, Domhoff (1996) used the Social Register and Who’s Who in America, and then assumed the daunting task of identifying every organization to which the power elite belongs. This approach leaves some conceptualization and operationalization questions unanswered. How did Domhoff determine which organizations are important to study, and which are not? Aren’t there some organizations where membership is not considered prestigious or powerful? Did he analyze membership in these? Did he compare memberships among powerless organizations? Utilizing published lists to generate a working definition of power has some external flaws.
Regarding the present case study on the Ivanpah airport, would it be possible to trace the relationships of all Las Vegas corporate interests? Or to identify every organization with which they are a member, and then identify which organization is the most central to the business sector? Are these findings valid?

In order to answer these questions, I attempted to identify a list of economic elites for Las Vegas. There is not a Social Register for every city in the United States, and there is no Social Register for Las Vegas. With no official list of economic elites, a seemingly reasonable place to begin was with the 1999 Book of Lists published by the Las Vegas Business Press. The authors provide statistics about every established business in the Las Vegas area, including number of employees, CEO or owner, and type of business, and it ranks the top 100 businesses according to reported revenue. The Book of Lists could be one tool hypothetically used to identify the Las Vegas power elite; yet, there are inaccuracies within this list that necessitate attention. At the bottom of each page there are footnotes reminding the reader that some businesses are not represented in the publication due to missed deadlines and unwillingness to reveal certain statistical information. How many businesses were omitted? What kind are they? Logically, information taken from sources such as the Book of Lists may be legitimate, but how accurate is a publication such as this? Some speculation can be made on the basis of such lists; yet, the researcher must approach these sources with caution, as validity issues exist with these texts.

Membership network analysis associated with the class-based approach is useful for identifying economic influences present in policy-making decisions.
despite issues of validity. Yet in this case, I did not visibly detect economic interests attempting to influence the Ivanpah development; therefore, I did not pursue membership network analysis. I recognize that economic ideologies are present in the project, and I will discuss them further in the conclusion of the thesis.

Pluralist Methodology

Dahl (1961) utilized the case study approach in his classic study of New Haven, Connecticut. He conducted 46 interviews with people including people in business, education, public service, law, insurance and labor, who participated in key political decisions in 1957 and 1958. He conceptualized “economic notables” by using the local newspaper’s society page (p. 332). He also developed an “index of social position” using factors such as area of residence, occupation, and education (p. 341). Dahl used this information in order to determine who had the most influence in significant political decisions.

Dahl’s conceptualization of economic influence is externally flawed in the same ways as Domhoff. Dahl, like Domhoff, established indicators for financial power; what Domhoff referred to as the power elite, Dahl referred to economic notables. Yet, Dahl’s findings offer a new approach to the same empirical questions, with a twist. Because power is situational and fleeting, this new method seeks to discover if anybody governs, rather than who governs, just as Polsby (1960) describes. The researcher doesn’t have to conceptualize indicators representing involvement in policy-making. Rather, the focus is to
identify everyone involved to determine who governs, if anybody.

Dahl's case study approach is useful for analyzing political decision making processes within a community setting. Pluralist inquiry allows one to fully investigate the theoretical questions, who governs and how? By tracing three policy decisions made by people and agencies involved in the process, Dahl was able to make some generalizations about who wields the power in policy decisions, and which groups of people are more or less represented in policy decisions. His methods are useful, and it is clear who is involved in policy decisions are how decisions are executed. As I'll discuss next, state-centered research has not considered social or economic class of involved actors as important as the organizational structure under which political decisions are made.

State-Centered Methodology

Some of Skocpol's work involved a historical study of New Deal politics including the National Recovery Administration (1935), the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (1935), the National Industrial Recovery Act (1930), and the Wagner National Labor Relations Act (1930). In her research, Skocpol utilized an in-depth historical analysis in order to define the organizational power of the state. She relied on historical and legislative documents for the bulk of her research to identify exactly who was involved in these political decisions, and how these decisions were executed. Other state-centered theorists note that levels of power within the state vary according to political position (Kourvetaris
and Dobratz 1982). State organization and role responsibilities are the elements used to generate state-centered conceptualizations of power.

Absent from the state-centered approach is the distinction of social or economic power included within the pluralist and class-based approaches. State-centered theorists acknowledge “the influence of variables pertaining to the individuals, groups, elites, and classes that are central to the (class-based) theories...but economic patterns and social actors must be situated in relation to the state and political parties” (Finegold and Skocpol 1995:29-30). State-centered’s primary theoretical unit of analysis is the state’s structure and organization; economic influence is of significantly less importance. Therefore, state-centered research is concerned with identifying actors and functions in policy-making.

Methods used by state-centered theorists identify the people involved in policy-making and the structure to which they belong to make conclusions about the power involved in political process. Similar to pluralism, state-centered theorists identify who governs; but unlike pluralists, they argue that structure and organization ultimately dictates the amount of power yielded in political decision making. Like the pluralists, state-centered methodology allows for the identification of actors involved, and how their decisions are executed.

To conclude, the case study is a useful tool to investigate political power in a community setting and is the basis for this research. Using interviews, attending public meetings, and document analysis, I have attempted to create a rich description of the events that shaped the Ivanpah Valley airport development.
Additionally, I have described methods used by theorists who spearheaded the explanatory models informing this research. I have identified issues of validity in the work of Domhoff and Dahl who attempted to establish economic indicators of power. My focus is to identify those involved, and the mechanisms used, to influence policy decision. While the class-based perspective also seeks to answer who rules, membership network analysis was not needed in this investigation because there was no overt economic elite action. In turn, pluralist and state-centered approaches are more useful for this study.
CHAPTER 4

THE DECISION TO BUILD THE IVANPAH AIRPORT

The main questions guiding this research are: who was involved in the decision to build the Ivanpah airport? How was this decision made? What mechanisms allow for control over the process? And who benefits from the decision to build the airport? In this analysis, it is clear that the state was instrumental in the decision to construct the airport, and in its location. This finding fits with state-centered arguments about the influence of the state over many political and social decisions. I argue that the Clark County government's organizational structure, specifically the autonomy granted to the Department of Aviation, allowed aviation officials to define the need and set the agenda for a new airport. Additionally, the state-centered approach implies that state agencies benefit from political and social decisions. My analysis suggests that the Clark County Department of Aviation significantly benefited from its decision to construct a new airport.

Recall the fundamental assumptions of state-centered theory; the state is the supreme decision-maker. State actors are experts in public policy, who theoretically make decisions that benefit the public; yet in reality, they utilize their political position to make decisions that benefit the state. In this chapter, I will
describe how state actors dominated the decision to build the Ivanpah Valley airport. I will begin by describing the chain of command within the Clark County government to provide an understanding of how significant county agencies are related to one another, and how this relationship has allowed for central control of the Ivanpah Valley airport development process. This control weighed against citizen involvement in the decision to build the airport. The Clark County government's organizational structure is one mechanism of wielding political power in the case of the Ivanpah airport. By virtue of their legitimacy and authority, they were able to define the need for a new airport and set the agenda so the question of whether to build a new airport is never available for public debate.

The Power of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Clark County Department of Aviation

The local government in Las Vegas is divided into four separate divisions; City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, City of Henderson, and Clark County. The city governments of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Henderson have not played a role in the Ivanpah decision, although the entire valley will be impacted by the project. It has been the Clark County government that has been most involved in the process. Thus, I will highlight two county agencies, the Clark County Department of Aviation (CCDA) and the Board of County Commission, and describe how they dominated the process behind the decision to build the Ivanpah Valley airport.
The CCDA's primary responsibility is development and operations of airports in Clark County. McCarran International Airport is the primary commercial airport, and there are five smaller, reliever airports that also serve Clark County. Aviation officials are not elected to their positions, rather they are appointed by the Board of County Commission (BCC), which oversees aviation activities. Even though the CCDA falls under the BCC in the county government's organizational structure, it operates independently with almost no oversight of its operating functions, thus making it possible to decide almost completely independently that a new airport was needed for Las Vegas.

The CCDA has a unique advantage that the vast majority of other county agencies do not have, the capacity to generate its own revenue and spend it internally. The county refers to the CCDA as an enterprise department because its financial operations resemble a private entity. Other county department earnings are combined into one pool called the 437 Fund; this fund is used to oversee County functions that service all 1.4 million constituents in Clark County. A Clark County official who wished to keep his identity confidential explains, "the airport and a couple of the departments work differently. They get to generate their own revenue and spend it however they see fit, instead of it going into the general fund and ending up in social services, or family and youth, or something like that. It gets to stay there and be spent which is kind of a nice luxury. But ultimately their budget has to be approved by the Board of County Commission." Generally there are few, if any budgetary changes to the CCDA's proposals and allocations.
Such autonomy gives the CCDA an operating advantage. Because it generates its own earnings, it is not under as much financial scrutiny compared with other county agencies. When the CCDA identifies air transportation needs it is easy for them to execute plans to accommodate them because they do not have too many bureaucratic hurdles to leap, and the hurdles that do exist typically are not hard to clear. CCDA projects and initiatives are typically passed with little conflict or discussion in the Clark County Board of County Commission.

In making the decision that another airport was necessary, the CCDA was able to investigate options autonomously with minimal oversight from any other governing agency or the general public.

The only level of approval that the CCDA must gain before embarking on major projects is the Board of County Commission (BCC), the foremost level of power in the Clark County government. Although the CCDA has considerable leeway in its operational functions, this agency falls below the BCC in the county government's organizational structure; yet, because the BCC has so many responsibilities within the local government, it only oversees the aviation's budget, leaving general operations to the department.

The BCC is the top-level agency within the county government's organizational structure, and oversees a multitude of county functions and services, including legislative issues, short and long term planning, and providing for the needs of the community, its infrastructure, and the needs of the citizens. Leading the commission are seven commissioners who are elected from specific geographic districts in the county. Because they are elected to their position, the
commissioners do not report to a higher authority, but they are accountable to their constituents. And as needed, there is an oversight committee, which is an ethical board to handle problems with the commissioners and violations of citizen rights.

The county commissioners are involved in numerous county operations. The BCC holds a formal, bi-monthly meeting where they approve contracts, licenses, public works projects, and budget items, and a bi-monthly zoning board meeting, where they approve land uses, variances, and zoning proposals. In addition, a Clark County official notes, "(the commissioners) sit on the Board of the Water District, the Board of the Sanitation district...they control the liquor and gaming licensing board...(S)o that's how, they control an awful lot just though the boards that they sit on, all seven of them." I have provided details about the CCDA and the Board of County Commission because they are the agencies primarily responsible for the Ivanpah Valley airport development. In the following section, I will describe the rationale behind the decision to build a new airport, and how these agencies dominated in this decision process.

Result of Autonomy: CCDA Defines

The Need For a New Airport

Airport officials note that nearly half of all tourists arrive in Las Vegas by air. According to figures from the CCDA, when several megaresorts opened for business during the 1990s, air passenger activity jumped from 19.1 million to 33.6 million, a compounded growth rate of 6.5 percent. In 2000 alone,
passenger activity increased an additional nine percent. McCarran officials recognize the symbiotic relationship between tourism, specifically the number of available hotel rooms, and air travel. They estimate that each hotel room brings 350 passengers through the gates at McCarran International Airport; the rates of megaresort growth and air passenger activity seem to collaborate this relationship (CCDA 2001).

Currently, McCarran handles approximately 521,000 annual flights with the use of four runways for airplane taxi, take off, and landing. The department reports that once McCarran reaches its limit of 650,000 annual flights, the runway system will encounter delays of up to 45 minutes per flight. In 1990, the CCDA realized that McCarran would reach its maximum capacity around 2010. And so, in the early 1990s, the CCDA’s planning department began researching solutions to relieve McCarran’s growing pains. Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA recalls, “I think we accepted pretty early in the process that our abilities to further expand McCarran are very constrained at best, and at the worst they are nonexistent.” Efforts to expand existing facilities would not be possible due to physical constraints surrounding the airport, including the Strip, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, interstate roadways, the Union Pacific Railroad, and residential areas. In addition, the department reported that investing to expand McCarran’s existing facilities to accommodate 10 million passengers would not be as economical as it would to construct a new airport to accommodate 30 million passengers. Physical constraints and cost/benefit calculation considering
expansion of existing facilities led the department to begin its investigation into
the construction of a new airport.

The question of whether to build an airport was easily answered in the minds
of CCDA officials. For them, the answer is obvious; a continuous increase in the
annual number of tourists, in a city so dependent on a tourist economy, requires
an airport facility that can handle the enhanced air passenger load. Physical
constraints prevent the expansion of current facilities. The CCDA’s solution was
to build another airport to take Las Vegas tourism and commerce in to the next
century. A new airport will accommodate more passengers, and thus the
symbiotic relationship between tourism and the airline industry is essential to the
typical mode of economic growth for the Las Vegas Valley.

Does the CCDA understand the breadth of their decision to build a new
airport facility? Indeed, they have weighed the costs and benefits of keeping
McCarran as it is or building a new facility, and they have considered the airport’s
vital role in the Las Vegas tourist economy. It is their job to make sure that air
transportation needs are met for Clark County. But there are additional sides to
the issue with significant implications for the Las Vegas Valley. One issue
concerns the costs of unabated growth. Is it good for the city to attract more
visitors? Where will the people come from to work in the new airport? Where will
they live? Can the Las Vegas Valley support a new airport in terms of its
physical and social infrastructure, and environmental resources? Specifically
what effects will the inevitable population growth have given that water reserves

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
are dwindling and air pollution is increasing? Also, what do the citizens of Las Vegas want for their future? Have they ever been asked?

The issue of whether to build a new airport was never offered to the citizens of Las Vegas for public comment, consideration, or vote. Instead, the CCDA, in their expert opinion, decided that it was necessary to construct a new airport to supplement passenger activity at McCarran. Once the decision to build a new airport was made, it was never debated again. Lukes (1974) describes the practice of “agenda setting” in public policy where, “potential issues are kept out of politics whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or though individuals' decisions...and) observable conflict (is) successfully averted” (p. 24). In this case, the CCDA set the agenda to build a new airport; this decision was a closed process, occurring in the offices of the CCDA. The citizens of Las Vegas were never asked if they wanted a new airport; they were not even aware that the airport was being proposed. Consequently, aviation officials were able to continue with the new airport development process free from public notoriety and opposition.

Using their political role to set the agenda constitutes a key mechanism of control over the development process. By virtue of its legitimacy and authority in its position, aviation officials were able to make this decision almost completely on their own, without consulting any outside group, or the public. Through a process of rational calculation of costs and benefits, aviation “experts” made the decision that a new airport is needed. Yet, the CCDA considered only a few of the issues in their decision to build, mainly financial issues and an increasing
passenger count. Other social and environmental issues were not included in the rationale. Whether the decision is the right one for the city is not the focus of this paper; rather, the autonomy involved in this decision that has incredible significance for the Las Vegas Valley, is the salient feature of analysis. A new airport is the key to continued growth and development in Las Vegas, and this decision was made by an autonomous state agency, the CCDA. The evidence suggests that no other group was consulted in the decision to build the airport; once aviation officials decided to build a new airport, the agenda was set, and the question of whether to build would never come up for debate as the CCDA pursued the project.

Though Clark County CCDA independently determined that a new airport was needed, they had to obtain approval from the Board of County Commission to spend money on feasibility and airport location studies. On August 19, 1997 the CCDA presented to the BCC the first new airport agenda item. According to Clark County records, this agenda item requested approval from the BCC for the CCDA to pursue an agreement with Hamilton Associates, LLC and Dumez-GTM to "cover planning for a proposed new airport site." Hamilton Associates, LLC is a financing firm based in New York, and Dumez-GTM is an engineering firm in France¹. The agenda item designated these three agencies to finance, plan, and

¹ It is unclear whether Hamilton Associates, LLC and Dumez-GTM are still involved in the airport development process at this time. Dennis Mewshaw, a planning official with the CCDA, was reluctant to reveal the names of these business interests involved in the airport development during my interview.
design studies to investigate the new airport facility. The agenda item passed, and each of the six agenda items, concerning contractual issues, that followed passed. It is interesting to note, however, that there were no newspaper articles, nor any other evidence of public notoriety concerning the BCC's approval of the new airport proposal, which serves to illustrate the lack of public awareness in a decision with such large implications.

Though the BCC allows the CCDA to operate with minimal supervision, the BCC will maintain some level of control over the airport's development. A Clark County official suggests that, "(The BCC will) control the development of the Ivanpah... basically through the purse strings, having to approve everything that happens at the airport, from the acquisition of the property to the budget that they submit to build the first terminal, to approving the land use guide, which will

attempted several times to contact a representative of Hamilton Associates, LLC and Dumez-GTM for an interview, but was unsuccessful. Regardless of outside business financing or planning interests, the CCDA will be solely responsible for the development and operation of the airport. One member of the environmental community commented that this airport would be built regardless of outside private funding/assistance or not. He also reported that Hamilton Associates, LLC and Dumez-GTM were no longer involved with the airport development.

2 Clark County records do not include whether there was any formal discussion or debate between the commissioners and the CCDA. The record includes a description of the formal agenda item before the Board, who presented it, and a commissioner's signature, which indicates approval.
dictate what kind of things get developed out there, to folks that actually come on
to the first Avis rent a car, or whatever it is, actually approving their licenses and
permits to operate out there. Through all the different processes, (the BCC will)
ultimately dictate what happens out there.”

Airport Decision Made, Location Next

Once the decision was made to construct a new airport facility, the next
question is where to put it? According to Dennis Mewshaw, a planning official
from the CCDA, there was little choice regarding where to locate a new airport.
Mewshaw says that the CCDA looked at a number of sites, but later admitted
that they primarily used a “checklist” in their minds identifying factors for a viable
site and researched some sites more formally than others. I will describe the
location decision process in the following paragraphs, and demonstrate that just
as state agencies dominated the decision to build the Ivanpah airport, they also
dominated the decision of where to locate it, out of public view.

Location decisions were limited to areas south of the city. Physical barriers,
such as mountainous terrain and conflicting airspace in the sky surround the
northern, eastern, and western quadrants of the city. Nellis Air Force Base,
located just north of Las Vegas, and the Nevada Test Site at Yucca Mountain
control the majority of the northern airspace. To the west lie the Spring
Mountains and Red Rock Canyon, which is protected by wilderness designation.
To the east are more mountains and Lake Mead, also under
wilderness/recreational protection. There were two viable options for the CCDA
to consider after eliminating choices due to these physical constraints. One option was El Dorado Valley near Boulder City, just southeast of Las Vegas. The other was the Ivanpah Valley, due south of the city, between the casino towns of Jean and Primm. Ivanpah became the CCDA’s focus.

Because of its convenient access to I-15 and to the Union Pacific Railroad, the Ivanpah Valley allows for multi-modal transportation (air, rail, and road) of people and goods all in one location, according to Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA. The location also allows service for the greater southern Nevada-California region. The facility will sit directly on Roach Lake, a dry lakebed, situated between the interstate highway to the west, and the Union Pacific Railroad to the east. The airport will be approximately 30 minutes from downtown Las Vegas, a four and a half hour direct drive to Los Angeles via I-15, and nine hours to San Francisco. According to Mewshaw, “proximity and accessibility” to the entire southwest region were the two primary factors in the decision to locate the airport in the Ivanpah Valley.

The CCDA also argued that the Ivanpah Valley offers other advantages. One is a minimum of potential environmental impacts to the area. The dry lakebed on which the airport will sit reportedly supports little vegetation and wildlife. Additionally, because all the land in the Ivanpah Valley is federally owned, the CCDA has an opportunity to work with the BLM and comprehensive planning departments to control future development around the site. Together, these agencies can essentially designate the land surrounding the airport for uses that are compatible with the airport to avoid conflicting development patterns (i.e. like
not building residential sites within a certain distance of the airport). A Clark County official notes, "Right now the airport is looking to acquire the 6,500 acres. At that point then we'll have to figure out what to do with that land. Quite a bit of that is going to be zoned for public facility, which is something like an airport or school...That's one of our zoning designations, PF, public facilities...(Comprehensive Planning) appreciate(s) what (the CCDA) needs...in terms of fire and other infrastructure, and what typically develops around the airport."

The CCDA reports that they have already completed studies to determine the airport's feasibility in the Ivanpah Valley. They have conducted air space studies to determine that there is sufficient space to have an airport; a surface access study to make sure the highway can be widened; a storm water management study to make sure they can handle flooding. They have also examined air quality to see what effects emissions would have on the area. And they have completed preliminary investigation into impacts on flora and fauna. They are in the process of conducting an aggregate materials study to identify where they will acquire materials for concrete, and how they will transport it to the site. Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA reports that his department has already spent approximately $750,000 thus far in preliminary studies.

The CCDA feels potential locations for the new airport were limited, making the decision to site the facility in the Ivanpah Valley simple. However, others are not satisfied with the amount of research conducted by the department in order to identify alternative locations. According to Dennis Schramm of the Mojave
National Preserve, the "(CCDA) testified...at the congressional hearings...that they evaluated alternative sites. And we asked for a copy of their report. And what (the CCDA) gave us had a paragraph with three sentences that said they looked at alternative sites and none were feasible. That was the extent of their alternative evaluation. So we don't believe unless they can produce a second document that shows a realistic site evaluation."

Not only was the research for alternative locations shallow and quick, no other groups had any voice in where the new airport would be located, just as they had no voice in decisions about whether one was needed or beneficial. The lack of interest group involvement is a significant point, and it highlights the state's authoritative power in its decision to site the new airport in the Ivanpah Valley. The Bureau of Land Management, who controls the land on which the airport will be constructed, reported that they were not directly involved in the airport location studies, but according to Rex Wells, Assistant Field Manager for the Las Vegas BLM office, they provided "information regarding previous considerations for an airport in other areas...a site northeast of Las Vegas...and another site in Mesquite." Only very minimally was the BLM consulted on alternative airport sites. The Board of County Commission was not involved in the location decision. Nor were officials from the Mojave Desert Preserve, which is located just 16 miles away from the proposed site, or local residents who live near the airport's proposed site.

The decision to locate the airport in the Ivanpah Valley has important implications. The benefits of the Ivanpah Valley, as indicated by the CCDA, are
proximity, accessibility, and federal control of the land. In making the location decision, the CCDA considered travelers’ interests by selecting a relatively convenient location that is easy to access, as well as cargo/freight interests by choosing a location that allows for different modes of transporting goods. Federal land ownership allows the county to have more control over development patterns, in an attempt at “smart” growth in the area immediately surrounding the proposed airport.

Yet, advocates for the neighboring Mojave National Preserve, located just 16 miles from the proposed airport site, fear an airport located in the Ivanpah Valley will interfere with the visitor experience at the park by producing unwanted noise and light pollution. In addition, park officials are concerned that desert wildlife, including the endangered desert tortoise and bighorn sheep, will be negatively impacted by noise from low-flying aircraft. Others that could be potentially affected by the airport’s location are the residents of the nearby rural towns of Goodsprings and Spring Valley. One Clark County official noted that the residents of Goodsprings do not see any benefit from the new airport “other than more folks, more traffic, and more pollution.” When asked about the prospects of increasing property values as a result of the nearby airport he continued with, “(t)he majority of the folks could care less about that...They went out there for the rural quality of life.” Residents of Goodsprings and Sandy Valley chose the rural locale to isolate themselves from urban areas, not in the hopes that their property value will increase.
The salient point in sorting out the location selection process is that the people and places surrounding the proposed airport site were not involved in the decision to locate the airport in the Ivanpah Valley. Just as the CCDA decided to build a new airport with little input, they also made the decision of where to locate the new airport in the same way. The decision to build a new airport is a huge one, with potentially tremendous social and environmental impacts on the southern Nevada region. It begs the question of whether these types of decisions should be offered to the general public for formal input or consideration. Some scholars argue that even the most technically complex decisions benefit from widespread participation by lay citizens (Fiorino 1990; Fischer 1993; Laird 1993; Sclove 1995). The CCDA however failed to involve citizens, and instead utilized their autonomy within the county system to control this decision themselves. In doing so, they set the agenda so the issue of whether to build an airport was never made public at any point in the development process.

In the next phase of airport location selection, the public was again left out of the process. Even those that are living adjacent to the proposed site were not offered the opportunity to participate in the location decision. Once again, the CCDA exercised its position as legitimate authority to make a decision that has direct impact on those in the vicinity, as well the entire Las Vegas Valley. In this discussion, I have raised two issues that provide the foundation for this analysis. First, state officials were the only ones involved in the decision to build a new airport, and in its location. The other analytical issue is that the CCDA utilized
their position within the county government, and the authority and legitimacy that comes with that position, as a mechanism for control over the Ivanpah Valley airport development. In doing so, they were successfully able to proceed with their vision of a new airport, without any consideration from the public.

Ivanpah in the State-Centered View

The American democratic system is based on voting as the primary method of selecting leaders to make decisions on behalf of all citizens. People feel that they influence public policy by selecting those leaders who share similar beliefs and values as the constituents. Though it may appear that leaders seek public input, through elections and initiative votes, some argue that this is just a formality that pacifies the American public, making them feel that they actually have a voice, when in fact they do not. State-centered theorists argue that the state makes political decisions without truly incorporating legitimate input from the public; this is the outcome of state autonomy (Alford and Friedland 1985).

In defining the need to build an additional airport, and deciding its location in the Ivanpah Valley, my evidence suggests that this process was dominated by an autonomous state entity, without formal input from other interests. It may be argued that since county commissioners are elected positions, the public has some input into growth and development goals of Las Vegas. Citizens may elect commissioners that best represent their vision for the future of Las Vegas, who in turn, have some say in aviation functions. But this is just a way of making the public feel that they have some input in the functions of the county government.
The structure of the Clark County government provides a situation where the public has no major effect on the operations of the aviation department. The CCDA is not an elected position; it is an appointment by the county commission. The county commission oversees the CCDA's budget only, leaving the general operations to aviation officials. Alford and Friedland (1985) describe how bureaucratic organizations define expert roles. They suggest that bureaucracy and division of labor create the need for "technical capacity" and "administrative expertise" (p. 164). In this case, the bureaucratic nature of the county government allowed for aviation officials to assume the "expert" role of identifying transportation needs for the county. If the CCDA reports that an additional airport is necessary, then the county commissioners trust that this is so. The CCDA enjoyed relative autonomy in its operations, which enabled it to decide that a new airport was needed for Las Vegas. There was virtually no role for the general public in this process.

It brings up the issue of whether large-scale developments, such as the Ivanpah airport, should be subject to public notoriety, scrutiny, and even a full public vote. If not a public vote, then should the county commission have its own internal department to oversee, or participate more, in the general operations that are so vital to the Las Vegas economy and livelihood? Or should the system remain as it should, and citizens of Las Vegas should trust the expertise and experience of the CCDA to provide adequate transportation services, even if it includes constructing a new airport?
In the state-centered worldview, the state ultimately benefits from its structure and in decision outcomes, which also proves to be the case with Ivanpah. County officials, business interests, and others may argue that the airport is beneficial for the public at large. Visitors and others who arrive to Las Vegas by air will appreciate prompt arrival and departure times. They will also welcome the ability to choose from a variety of service carriers, because of the new airport’s capacity to utilize dozens of air travel companies. Local business will also enjoy the continued financial growth as a result of increased tourist travel, as predicted by aviation officials. Ultimately, the Ivanpah airport serves as a symbol of confidence in air travel capacity, which implies continued success in commercial and leisure industries.

Despite an economic argument that the Ivanpah airport is beneficial for all, not everyone will reap its benefits. Residents of nearby rural towns will have to contend with the airport’s existence, traffic congestion, and noise and air pollution. The environment will likely be affected in terms of urban sprawl, land desecration, and wildlife disturbance. The price paid for the airport by many will likely exceed the benefits enjoyed by a few. Also, those coming to Las Vegas via Ivanpah will be subjected to a 45-minute commute by way of interstate. There will be many who will find the drive to the Ivanpah Valley an inconvenience.

There are two entities that will definitely benefit from the airport’s construction, the Board of County Commission and the CCDA. The Board of County Commission has an interest in maintaining the tourist economy that Las Vegas enjoys. Although the airport’s income and expenditures do not directly come out
of the county budget, a profitable, new airport results in more people, business, and employment opportunities infiltrating an area that is currently undeveloped desert landscape. The addition of local citizens and business results in a wider tax base that is directly a part of the County Commission’s budget. A larger tax base creates further opportunities for the County Commission to acquire state and federal dollars. Procuring more money, operating a larger budget, and governing the nation’s fastest growing city are some of the benefits enjoyed by the Board of County Commission’s approval of the Ivanpah Valley airport.

If McCarran International reaches its maximum capacity limit, tourism is likely to stagnate. The CCDA will not turn away passengers, nor will they allow for lag-time delays as a result of increased air traffic congestion. The CCDA and the Las Vegas economy cannot afford to loose tourists. Therefore, the decision to construct a reliever airport is in the interests of both the CCDA, by serving more passengers, and the Board of County Commission, to maintain current growth and economic trends. The end result is financial gain, as well as increased power and prestige, among state officials. Though the public too will benefit from the new airport, state officials benefit far more disproportionately than does the public sector.

To sum, state managers are the dominant players involved in the decision to build the Ivanpah airport, and in the airport’s location process. The CCDA and the Board of County Commission are the key entities identified thus far during the airport’s conceptual beginnings. They were able to make this decision autonomously, away from the public eye, by virtue of the county government’s
organizational structure, and their assigned role within, to set the agenda that a new airport will be constructed. Although it can be argued that the general public will benefit from the airport’s development, there are a number of costs that have not been addressed (e.g., environmental, social). It must be noted that state officials, again the CCDA and the Board of County Commission, will reap the exceptionally large benefits. In the next chapter, I will examine the next significant threshold within the development process, acquiring the land, and I will demonstrate that the state continued to dominate, as it did in initial phases, in the Ivanpah Valley airport development process.
CHAPTER 5

THE NEXT STEP: ACQUIRING THE LAND

Once the decision was made that a new airport was necessary to meet the predicted air travel demands for the Las Vegas Valley and southwest region, and the decision was made to locate the new airport in the Ivanpah Valley, the next venture in the process was to acquire the land. In this chapter, I will detail typical land acquisition procedures in southern Nevada, highlighting the opportunities for public participation in the process. I will then describe how aviation officials circumvented these established processes by means of a legislative initiative to acquire the land for the airport, a process I call the "end around" approach. State officials dominated the land acquisition process by circumventing the normal means in an effort to save time and money, and also to eliminate citizen participation in the process. As with the decision to build the airport, and its location, the decision to pursue legislation supports state-centered assumptions about who holds political power, how it is wielded, and who benefits.

Land Acquisition in Southern Nevada

Approximately eighty percent of the land in Nevada, including the land identified for the proposed Ivanpah Valley airport, is owned and controlled by the
Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM is an arm of the U.S. Department of Interior that manages approximately 262 million acres in 12 western states. Its mission is to preserve and protect these public lands, and with that it has the delicate role of achieving balance between conservation, management of environmental resources, and recreation, and urban growth and development.

Ostensibly, land development decisions in southern Nevada occur through a pluralistic process. BLM’s regulatory control over public lands in Nevada requires private citizen and interest group feedback in land use decisions. One BLM provision for formal public input is the notice of realty, publicized by the BLM, which is the announcement to the public that the bureau is considering the land sale. During this period, citizens and interest groups are invited to provide input into the decision process at organized public forums. The public is also encouraged to express their views by letter or in person at the BLM field office. Once the public comment period has ended, BLM officials consider the ideas and concerns then decide how to approach the land sale.

If a decision is made to release land for sale, the BLM’s administrative process requires an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be completed. The EIS is a formal process established by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 that identifies “environmental impacts of the proposed action, any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided...(and) alternatives to the proposed action;” the EIS also ensures that “environmental amenities and values are given appropriate consideration in decision making, along with economic and technological considerations” (Marriott 1997:5). An EIS is
performed in the event that a project produces either significant or highly controversial environmental impacts (Jain, Urban, and Stacey 1977; Caldwell 1998; Eccleston 1999).

As with BLM standard procedure, the EIS process has several outlets for formal public input; the notice of intent, which is a declaration that the EIS will occur; a scoping process, which is a call for public comment about the spectrum of environmental studies that should comprise the EIS; progress report meetings where the public is updated about the process; a draft of the EIS is released for public inspection, which is then revised into a formal document; a record of decision is publicized, and after that, people who have concerns about the final document can go through an appeals process to address those concerns.

The BLM notice of reality and the EIS are usual procedures conducted prior to a land sale involving lands managed by the BLM in southern Nevada, especially for projects of a significant size such as the Ivanpah Valley airport. However, these processes were avoided when aviation officials decided to overstep the BLM and ask Congress to mandate the release of the land to the CCDA for purchase. I call this the “end-around” approach for acquiring the land. The end-around is like the football play in which the end avoids the major obstacles of tacklers in the middle of the field by running around and up the sideline. The CCDA avoided potential conflicts with public interests by circumventing the BLM standard process replete with participatory mechanisms, and instead made a dash for the federal level where legislation would avoid those hurdles. The notice of reality executed by the BLM, as well as the entire EIS process was
omitted prior to the land sale. The CCDA argues this method saves time and red
tape, which may be true, but at the expense of democratic involvement and
public interest. Involving Congress in the land sale, rather than proceed through
normative channels of land acquisition, is a mechanism of power and influence
utilized by the CCDA in the Ivanpah development process. In the next section, I
will describe in detail exactly how the end around occurred.

The Decision to Pursue Legislation

The BLM develops and manages land through an internally written and
approved Resource Management Plan according to Rex Wells, Assistant Field
Manager from the Las Vegas BLM field office. Wells notes that the plan
identifies land "for retention and federal ownership, for continued management,
for multiple use purposes, recreation, (and) wildlife... (and it) identified certain
lands in the Las Vegas district, that could be considered for disposal". The
latest plan was completed and approved in October 1998.

The options available to the CCDA for it to acquire the 6,500 acres identified
for the proposed airport include amending the Resource Management Plan or

1 The BLM uses the term "disposal" to refer to the process of conveying land for
purchase.

2 It took ten years to create, a lengthy process that was mainly due to the
addition of the desert tortoise to the endangered species list; this slowed down
the plan process, as the BLM was required to make provisions for the desert
tortoise.
having Congress mandate the conveyance of the land to the CCDA. These
same options are available to anyone who wishes to acquire BLM land. When
the CCDA first approached the BLM about the land, the Resource Management
Plan was not yet complete, and the Ivanpah land sale concept was already in the
legislative process\(^3\). The Resource Management Plan did not include provisions
for an airport, nor was the land identified for disposal. According to the BLM,
they do not like to amend plans right after they have been approved. Even so,
an amendment could be made to release the land for sale to the county, but that
process would require more work from the BLM, and would cause a delay for the
CCDA by 12-18 months, the amount of time an amendment generally takes.

To the BLM's system, Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA recalls, "we said well
we don't really want to wait that long, and being good bureaucrats that (the BLM)
were they said, well we don't really want to do that either because it's a lot of
work, and (there would be) public hearings...we went to each other and said
there's got to be a better way." There was another way, federal legislation
mandating the conveyance of the land in question. Wells explained, "The area
that (the CCDA) identified was not included in our resource management plan for
disposal. So the choices were at that point a plan amendment for a plan that had

\(^3\) There are contradictions in the data regarding the BLM's position toward the
land sale. The CCDA reports they went to Congress with BLM's concurrence to
petition for the land sale; yet, the BLM Las Vegas field office reports that the
decision to pursue legislation was already made when aviation officials first
approached them.
not been yet approved, or it could be done through legislation where Congress would identify that the lands are available for disposal. And (the CCDA) chose the legislative route."

Aviation officials report that to save time and red tape of executing a Resource Management Plan amendment, and to work cooperatively with the BLM, they decided to have Congress delegate the BLM to release the land to the CCDA. Additionally, they pursued legislation so the county would have more control over the price of the land. Typically with BLM land sales, once the BLM and the public have decided to proceed with the land sale, the land is placed for public auction and sold to the highest bidder. If the CCDA had gone the traditional route, and the BLM released the land for auction, then a private individual or group could come and offer even more money for the land. By doing so, Congress defines the terms of the land sale in a way that protects county from paying more money as a result of excessive bids.

Saving time and money are some of the benefits of pursuing legislation to acquire the land for the Ivanpah airport. But more compelling for this thesis is yet another consequence of legislative action, mainly the elimination of certain citizen participatory procedures established by the BLM and the entire EIS process prior to the land sale. By asking Congress to mandate the release of the land to the CCDA, the notice of realty and the EIS prior to the land sale are made exempt. As Dennis Schramm of the Mojave National Preserve explains, "this (land sale) is subject to NEPA. And the Congressional representatives said yeah, it probably is, but we're Congress and we can waive NEPA. And...they
can. Congress can do whatever they want." Ultimately, the legislation was written in a way that does not include provisions for an EIS to be conducted prior to the land sale, or for any other formal citizen participatory mechanisms to be included in the land sale process. The CCDA's decision to pursue legislation in order to acquire the land for the airport constitutes the "end around" play that was used to dominate the airport development process that in a way is essentially anti-democratic.

In an interview, one source that wishes to remain anonymous explained that no matter which action the CCDA could have taken, an EIS would have to be completed prior to the construction. In his mind (and also in the minds of the CCDA), it did not make sense to perform an EIS twice—prior to the land sale, and then prior to the construction. Additionally, when you have two EIS's it is more likely the project would get stopped by some outside group. One EIS will reduce the chance of an outside group preventing the construction. This source continued by suggesting that these particular avenues for public and interest group involvement are time-consuming and they require formal input that often slows the process. Therefore, it made more sense for the CCDA to utilize legislation to acquire the land, and then perform the required EIS prior to the airport's construction.

The "end around," which eliminates many bureaucratic steps that aim at, among other things, incorporating citizens in to the decision process, is an outright attempt to "streamline" (to use the words of Dennis Mewshaw) the process and exclude the public from deliberations concerning the land sale.
Aviation officials decided to utilize legislative means to acquire the land, rather than standard procedure, not only to save time and money, but also to eliminate mechanisms for citizen input to ensure that the land sale would occur. Moreover, this decision was made essentially before the decision to build a new airport was publicized; the citizens of Las Vegas never got a chance to give input into whether to build an airport, nor in to the decision of where to locate the new airport. As explained in the previous chapter, state officials utilized their position in the county government to define the need, and set the agenda for a new airport. State officials then exercised their power through the “end around” approach to acquire the land for the airport that intentionally omits public participation in the process. Where established processes to acquire land in southern Nevada require input from private citizens and interest groups under BLM policy, congressional legislation makes it possible to circumvent these procedures.

The State Benefits From the “End Around”

The decision to pursue legislation directly benefited both the CCDA and the BLM. These benefits point to the relevance of state-centered theory in this crucial chapter of the Ivanpah story. The CCDA primarily benefited from the decision to pursue legislation, providing strong evidence that the state was acting in its own interests. By streamlining the process the CCDA was able to acquire the land through fewer bureaucratic steps with less chance for the acquisition to
fail or be delayed as a result of public involvement. Legislation saved the CCDA
time, effort, and money, and it, all but, guaranteed that the land sale would occur.

Airport officials report that by obtaining the land through legislation they have
more control over development patterns in that region. As I explained in the
previous chapter, because the land surrounding the airport is federal land, the
county will have input on land use designation for that area; this would not be
possible if the land was owned by a private entity. Because of federal ownership
of the land, the CCDA can work with the BLM and Comprehensive Planning to
develop a land use plan that complements the airport rather than developing
structures that interfere with airport operations. In short, airport officials do not
want homes or schools built within a certain vicinity of the airport. Pursuing
legislation made it possible for the CCDA to control development patterns in the
area, another benefit enjoyed by the CCDA.

However, it must be understood that the CCDA is only concerned with
development patterns in the immediate vicinity of the airport, and not
development patterns for the entire Las Vegas Valley. In addition, they have not
considered potential social issues or factors related to environmental resources.
Although these concerns are the responsibility of the Comprehensive Planning
department, they are critical issues that were not considered in the decision to
build the airport, not in the decision to locate it in the Ivanpah Valley. The CCDA
operated under a narrow perspective without considering the larger picture.

Finally, another benefit to pursuing legislation is the county's ability to have
control over the price of the land. If they had gone the traditional route, and the
BLM released the land for public auction, a private individual or group could come and offer even more money for the land. The bidding process is eliminated utilizing legislation rather than standard BLM procedure, and Congress defines the terms of the land sale. As it currently stands, the value of the land will be determined through a standard appraisal process, and Clark County will pay fair market value for the land.

The BLM also benefited from the CCDA’s decision to pursue legislation. BLM officials spent ten years on their Resource Management Plan, which among other things identifies land for disposal in southern Nevada. They revealed that their Resource Management Plan did not include provisions for a new airport at the time Ivanpah was being considered. Even though the decision to pursue legislation was already made when airport officials approached the BLM, BLM officials reported they do not like to amend Resource Management Plans during the process, or just after its approval. The amendment process takes 12-18 months; for the BLM, it is not efficient to do a land use amendment immediately after the lengthy process of approving a general Resource Management Plan.

Though BLM officials would not admit that the legislative route was easier, avoiding a land use amendment and pursuing congressional legislation to release land for sale significantly reduces the BLM workload. Once again, state agency benefits from the decision to pursue legislation saving time, effort, and money.

In conclusion, just as state managers were the primary players involved in the decision to build the airport, and in its location, state managers were the
dominant players in the decision to pursue legislation that made it possible to acquire the land. The CCDA autonomously decided to use legislative means to acquire the land, rather than go through the established processes. This "end around" approach intentionally omits the public from the land acquisition process altogether, when under normal circumstances the public is an intricate part of this decision. Finally, state agencies, the CCDA and the BLM benefited greatly from this decision. As a result, these agencies saved time, money, and effort; in addition, this strategy guaranteed for the CCDA that the land sale would occur, and allowed them control over the price of the land and control over surrounding areas. In this next chapter, I will continue depicting the next phase of the "end around" strategy in the land release. I will describe the life of the legislation and demonstrate that state actors once again utilized their role and position to wield power in the Ivanpah Valley airport development process.
CHAPTER SIX

THE IVANPAH LEGISLATION

I have argued that the state was the primary actor in the decision to build the airport, where to locate it, and in deciding how to go about acquiring the land. The county government's structure allowed aviation experts to define the need and to set the agenda for a new airport. Moreover, aviation officials circumvented established land acquisition procedures using an "end around" approach. The state exercised its power over the Ivanpah Valley airport development process, which served in the state's interests and to support state status quo.

In this chapter, I will continue the discussion of the second phase of the "end around" approach by describing the legislative events that allowed the CCDA to acquire the land for the new airport. I will trace the Ivanpah initiative, and highlight the mechanisms used by opposing sides to impact the final legislative outcome. The legislative forum is ostensibly a pluralistic arena where democratic ideals include open consideration of issues. For the first time opposing viewpoints began to emerge in the Ivanpah Valley airport development story. Outside interest groups made efforts to influence the legislation by means of negotiating with congressional aids, resulting in some changes in the legislative
language. Yet, despite the efforts of opposing interest groups, state actors were the dominant actor in the legislation. The salient analytical elements of this discussion involve continued state domination over the Ivanpah development process, evidenced by state actors providing congressional testimony that allowed for minimal deep debate, an absence of significant formal representation of all sides to the argument, and a final outcome that allowed the CCDA to acquire the land.

The 105th Congress

It took two congressional sessions before the Ivanpah initiative was signed into law in October 2000. The first congressional session, the 105th Congress, presents a situation where state officials dominated the legislative arena via congressional testimony, and allowed for only minimal debate on the Ivanpah issue. This situation occurs in a context in which state actors had previously defined the need, and set the agenda for a new airport in previous stages of the development. In turn, the issue of whether to build was not raised in the congressional forum. However, environmental groups representing the Mojave National Preserve and other local groups in Las Vegas negotiated with congressional aids to include some legislative language that protects environmental interests. In this section, I will describe the ways that state agencies and outside interest groups set the stage for the final legislative outcome that occurred in the 106th Congress.
The Ivanpah legislation, formally entitled the Ivanpah Valley Airport Public Lands Transfer Act, was introduced in the House of Representatives on April 22, 1998 as HR 3705 by Representative Jim Gibbons (R-Nevada), and in the Senate on April 21, 1998 as S 1964 by Senator Harry Reid¹ (D-Nevada). The bill requested Congress to authorize the Bureau of Land Management to release 6,650 acres to the Clark County CCDA for the construction of the Ivanpah Valley Airport. In return, Clark County will pay fair market value for the land, which will be determined through an appraisal process, and the land will be purchased and conveyed in small parcels over a 20-year span.

HR 3705 was referred to the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, where Randall Walker from the Clark County CCDA and Pete Culp from the Bureau of Land Management testified on June 23, 1998. Walker reported to the subcommittee that the tourism industry is expanding and contributing to a significant increase in passenger activity at McCarran International Airport. Due to physical constraints, Walker testified that McCarran is not able to expand its current facilities. He explained that the construction of a new airport was necessary to meet the demands of increased tourist influx and an expanding economy. He then discussed the benefits of the Ivanpah Valley

¹ During this time, Senator Harry Reid was the Senate Majority Whip. The reader should understand that although the evidence does not overtly indicate that Reid's position helped the legislation to pass, it may be a reasonable assumption to make.
location, while pointing out that efforts to find another airport location revealed no better alternative.

Pete Culp of the Bureau of Land Management in Washington D.C. testified against the legislation. First, he reported conflicting uses of the proposed site: grazing and mining rights, desert tortoise habitat area, power lines, interstate, off-road vehicle recreation, and the area is used for sky diving. An airport constructed in the Ivanpah Valley, according to Culp, would interfere with these existing uses of the area. Secondly, he voiced concern over the appraisal of the land, which would occur within six months of the legislation’s passage, but would be purchased over a 20 year time period. As a result, the value of the land will increase over time, but the price will be locked into current appraisal figures, resulting in the public’s loss of fair payment. Finally, his last main point was the absence of a map of the proposed airport and location. He testified that a land sale should not occur without an official, representative map of the area.

At this point the reader may be wondering why the BLM provided testimony against the legislation. Recall in the previous chapter, I reported how representatives from the BLM’s Las Vegas office explained that in order for the CCDA to acquire the land using standard procedure, the BLM would have to complete a Resource Management Plan amendment. An amendment is both costly and time-consuming, and the local BLM was not enthusiastic about amending a plan that was not yet finished, and because it had taken ten years to create. According to Rex Wells of the Las Vegas BLM, it seemed reasonable for
the CCDA to utilize legislative means, rather than established BLM procedure, to acquire the land.

However, it was the federal BLM that gave testimony during the congressional hearing, not the local Las Vegas BLM office. Rex Wells explains that his staff provided logistic information regarding the land in question to the federal BLM office, but he reports that they did not offer input regarding the congressional testimony itself. Additionally, Wells did not take an official stand in support or against the legislation. It is possible that there was not much communication between the Las Vegas BLM office and the federal BLM office and that would explain their differing opinions regarding the land sale, thus providing further evidence that supports how the bureaucratic nature of the state allowed the CCDA to dominate the airport development process. Yet, another explanation for the difference in support may lie with the methods of this research. At the time I conducted my interview with the Las Vegas BLM office the Ivanpah legislation had already passed. During the hearings, however, perhaps the federal BLM realized that the legislation would pass; therefore, they attempted to achieve what mitigations they could using congressional testimony.

By the time I conducted an interview with the local BLM office, the immediate attention was off of the BLM, and both the local and federal BLM were able to take the time to re-collect themselves, and take a more “cooperative” (i.e. supportive) stance with the project.

Congressional testimony is one mechanism used to influence the Ivanpah legislation. Ideally, congressional testimony is an opportunity for interest groups
to illustrate all aspects of a proposal so congressional members can make an informed decision. On the surface, it appears that the CCDA, a proponent of the airport, and the Bureau of Land Management, which was initially opposed, was able to express their viewpoints in front of a neutral congress, suggesting a balanced representation of issues.

However, in the initial decision to build the airport aviation experts defined the need and set the agenda that required the construction of a new airport for Las Vegas. At that point, it was never publicly, or openly debated as to whether to build the airport, only how to go about doing it. Likewise in the congressional hearings, it was never debated whether a new airport is the solution for McCarran’s growing pains, or whether it is the best decision given the paradox of growth versus environmental sustainability in Las Vegas. The issue of whether to build a new airport was never considered in the formal congressional arena. It would have been appropriate to inform congress about the questionable method of obtaining the land by legislation that deviates from standard BLM procedure, and eliminates opportunities for citizens to provide feedback; yet, this too was not addressed in the 105th Congress. Therefore, I argue that the congressional debate was not truly a “real” debate. The range of issues surrounding the Ivanpah airport were not fully explored, making congressional consideration about how to acquire the land secondary to the larger issues at stake.

The legislation passed in the House subcommittee on August 6, 1998; however, Representative James Hansen (Utah), the House subcommittee chairman, added three amendments in response to the testimonies made by the
CCDA and the BLM. These amendments are indicators of how both the state and outside interest groups were able to influence the legislative decision that allowed the CCDA to purchase the land from the BLM. The following description of the amendments illustrates how the state used its political position, and how environmental groups used negotiation, to influence the legislative outcome.

The first of the three amendments required a map of the proposed Ivanpah airport development area to be filed with Congress and the BLM. This amendment is a way of legitimizing the transaction so that it would be clear exactly what area of land was considered in the legislation. This amendment is not as salient for analysis, considering the breadth of the legislation itself. The other two amendments, allowing for Visual Flight Rules despite the Ivanpah airport’s existence, and allowing the land to revert back to the federal government in the case the airport is not constructed are significant.

The Visual Flight Rules amendment required that Clark County conduct an airspace assessment to determine whether small airplanes would be able to navigate using Visual Flight Rules (VFR) despite the airport’s existence, and allow the local Jean airport to continue its aviation operations. The amendment was written, in part, because Representative Hansen is a recreational pilot and is sympathetic to small aviation aircraft. Had the bill not appeared before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, it is possible that this

---

2 Visual Flight Rules are a type of navigation in which pilots utilize markers on the ground (such as railroad tracks and highways) to visibly locate their position and direction.
amendment may not have been considered. Although the debate on this amendment was not recorded, it is probable that Hansen utilized his role as chairman of the House Subcommittee to push for an issue to which he is particularly sympathetic toward. Analysis of the second amendment illustrates how state actors utilized their political position within the government to their advantage to influence the Ivanpah legislative outcome.

The final amendment introduced in the House Subcommittee reverts the land back to BLM ownership in the event that the airport is not constructed. According to one representative of the environmental community in Las Vegas, this amendment was included as a result of negotiations with congressional aids. He explained that environmental groups (such as Sierra Club and Red Rock Audubon) negotiated with congressional aids to include a reversionary clause. He noted that during a previous legislation similar in nature to Ivanpah, land was sold for development that never happened. Instead of the land reverting back to the BLM, it was sold to another developer who had different intentions for use of the land; he said this was perhaps the “biggest environmental disaster in southern Nevada.” As a result, environmentalists began working with congressional aids to include the reversionary clause to prevent another similar mishap. Environmental activists also attempted to achieve other mitigations from the legislation, such as the designation of more wilderness, which were unsuccessful.

The addition of the reversionary clause is evidence that political negotiations are another mechanism used to influence the legislation. However, in this case it
was not the state that initiated the mechanism; rather, environmental groups utilized negotiations. Taken on its own, alteration of the legislation resulting from environmental groups negotiating with congressional aids could represent pluralistic political power in the Ivanpah legislation. Recall that in pluralism, interest groups compete to have their issues addressed in policy decision outcomes. A key element is the freedom and equal access to the policy-making arena by all interested parties. Interest groups may use different tactics, such as lobbying, voting, or organized interest group activity. Power is measured in the successful attempts to influence decision outcomes.

One could argue that the environmental community was successful in using negotiations with congressional representatives to influence the legislation, thus depicting a pluralist conception of power within the Ivanpah airport case. However, the concession granted to the environmental community is a very minimal concession when considering the case as a whole. Again, it must be noted that the public was never given opportunity for input. Aviation officials were successful in pursuing the Ivanpah Valley airport as a reliever airport for McCarran, and they were successful in achieving an alternative method for obtaining the land that circumvents citizen participation. Likewise, the CCDA achieved success with the initiative's passage in the House subcommittee with only minimal changes that do not directly impact the department's ability to purchase the land, nor interfere with the airport's construction. Environmental groups voices were heard and they were able to achieve some concessions within the legislative language. However, these concessions are very minor.
when compared to the bigger picture that includes the construction of a new airport in the Ivanpah Valley.

Moreover, environmental debates were never formally recognized and were never given official congressional attention during the 105th Congress. Environmental interest groups did not present formal congressional testimony, thus denying members the opportunity to entertain official, formal consideration of the pros and cons of the Ivanpah Valley airport development. However, environmental issues were considered less formally, outside the hearing, giving the state the upper hand, in addition to the state's already advantageous position that limits the "real" debate. The state was the dominant influence in the legislation, and the state benefited most from the legislative outcome in the 105th Congress. The state's organizational structure, specifically the position and authority assigned to state actors who minimized the debate, is a mechanism that allowed for state officials to exercise power and influence over the legislation, despite input from outside interest groups.

The Ivanpah legislation failed to pass during the 105th session. Both Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA and newspaper articles report this was not a result of environmental opposition to the bill, but because the initiative was a part of a collection of bills that had minimal significance and priority in the House. Additionally, according to one newspaper report, the Ivanpah legislation was "wrapped alongside dozens of other park bills inside a larger omnibus bill that the House killed in October 1998" (Grove 1999).
For the first time in the Ivanpah story, newspaper articles appeared depicting the play-by-play of legislative events. They described which congressional members supported or opposed the legislation. The bill had the full support of all Nevada representatives. Opposed were Representative Bruce Vento (D-Minnesota) and Representative Eni F.H. Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa). According to one newspaper article, Vento raised concern about the potential negative effect airplanes may have flying over the Mojave National Preserve (Preston 1998). One newspaper article reported that Nevada representatives responded by suggesting that airplanes are already currently flying over the preserve, and they assured that the airport would not have any significant effect on the Preserve (Preston 1998).

Other stories appeared in the newspaper describing issues of contention outside the congressional arena. One article reported BLM opposition to the airport, summing up the arguments made by Pete Culp in his congressional testimony. This same article also identified the Sierra Club’s opposition to the airport, supporting BLM’s rationale, but also in support of preserving desert wildlife and visitor experience at the Mojave National Preserve (Manning 1998). News stories characterized the nuances of the legislative language, but what they failed to do was to present the argument of whether to build the airport in the first place. During the legislative process, the public first learned about the Ivanpah airport development in the newspaper. However, what they read were only legislative updates; therefore, citizens of Las Vegas were not informed of the entire issue at stake. This is another key issue that points to how airport officials
set the agenda to build the airport, apart from the public arena; the question of whether to build the airport was never open for public debate. Stories available in newsprint served to reinforce questions about how to build the airport rather than should an airport be constructed and should it be built in the Ivanpah Valley.

The 105th Congress saw the progression of a fairly straightforward legislation that mandated the BLM to release certain lands to the Clark County CCDA. The legislation included provisions to protect affected parties, including small aircraft pilots and environmental groups. State actors used their political position to make these amendments happen. Also, environmental groups used pre-established relationships with congressional members to successfully promote reversionary language. In the 106th Congress, the "end around" approach the CCDA utilized to acquire the land for the airport was ultimately successful. In the following discussion on this congressional session, note that both state actors and outside interest groups gave congressional testimony before the bill's passage into law. Yet, I will argue that the state had more power over the final decision.

The 106th Congress

The Ivanpah legislation was re-introduced in the House of Representatives on May 5, 1999 as HR 1695, and in the Senate on April 29, 1999 as S 930. Both initiatives included the amendments proposed by Representative Hansen in the previous legislative session. There were two occasions where Congress entertained oral testimony regarding the Ivanpah issue. One was during the
House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands on July 13, 1999 and the other was during an hour of debate on the House floor on March 9, 2000. Contrary to the 105th Congress, where only state representatives offered congressional testimony, the 106th Congressional members heard testimony from both state and non-state agencies. State agencies were represented by Dennis Mewshaw of the Clark County CCDA and Jacqueline Lowey of the National Park Service; Marcia Argust of the National Parks and Conservation Association represented the non-state agency in this round of congressional testimony.

In his testimony, Mewshaw shared his concerns about McCarran's maximum capacity and its inability to serve the ever-increasing tourism demands of Las Vegas. He noted that McCarran is also at its maximum expansion limit due to physical constraints. Therefore, a new airport is necessary to serve the growing economy. Mewshaw reported that land suitable for a new airport was limited, due to neighboring mountains and military air space. He extols the benefits of the Ivanpah Valley for its multi-modal transportation opportunities (e.g., interstate, railroad, and airport) and also its proximity to Las Vegas and southern California. He testified that time is running out for McCarran, and that pursuing legislation to acquire the lands helps save time and bureaucratic red tape. Finally, he assured the Committee that the CCDA would make every effort to avoid flying over the Mojave National Preserve.

Jacqueline Lowey from the National Park Service testified against the legislation, raising concerns about the potential adverse impact on the Mojave National Preserve. In addition, she elaborated on the issue of circumventing
normal procedures to acquire the land, suggesting that the legislation waives the analysis for alternative airport sites, and eliminates outlets for citizen participation in the decision to convey the land to the CCDA. Finally, she testified that the fair market value determined for the land would not reflect the enhancement on the property as a result of the airport's construction, and she urged that this issue be considered in the final decision.

Marcia Argust from the National Parks Conservation Association also testified in Congress against the Ivanpah legislation. She described how the desert's fragile ecosystem, including the desert tortoise and bighorn sheep, would be potentially harmed from airplane noise. Also, she testified that unchecked sprawl and increased air pollution would result from the airport's construction. Light pollution interfering with the desert night sky was also an issue. She ended by expressing concern over the exemption of the Environmental Impact Study to be conducted prior to the land sale, which circumvents the usual processes of acquiring land in Nevada. Omission of citizen input regarding the land sale was a concern.

Once again, the evidence presented in the congressional testimony reveals pluralistic mechanisms used to influence the outcome. Opposing interests were heard in an ostensibly neutral congressional arena. Both state and non-state agencies competed to have their issues addressed in the final legislative outcome. One might argue when examining the testimonies given at the 106th Congress, it appears that pluralism is an appropriate conceptual explanation of the events. Yet, just as I argued during my discussion of the 105th Congress,
these testimonies are minor when compared to the major omissions in the Ivanpah case. Again, the issue of whether or not to build was never formally discussed in congress. I will address the notion of pluralist explanations in the conclusion of this thesis.

To continue, in addition to the testimonies provided at the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, Congress also allowed one hour of general debate between representatives during the general session on March 9, 2000. Within the debate, four representatives (from Utah, California, Nevada, Minnesota) spoke in support of the Ivanpah bill and two written statements (from Alaska and a representative from the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure) were read in support of the legislation. Only Representative Vento (Minnesota) spoke against the bill. The bill passed the House on March 9, 2000 in a vote yielding 420 yeas, 1 nay, and 13 no-votes.

Once the bill passed the House, it was sent to the Senate for review. Some amendments were made, including the provision for the value of the land to be determined from fair market value, without omitting the enhancement of the property as a result of the airport's construction, as testified by the National Parks Service. It passed as part of a collection of several bills by unanimous verbal consent on October 5, 2000. The bill went back to the House for review of the amendments, passed with a verbal vote, and was cleared to go to the White House for the President's signature. On October 27, 2000, President Clinton signed the Ivanpah Valley Airport Public Lands Transfer Act into law.
Prior to the conveyance of the land, the law requires an airspace assessment to be completed and approved by the Federal Aviation Administration that identifies “potential adverse effects to the Las Vegas Basin under visual flight rules that would result from the construction and operation of a commercial or primary airport” (Public Law 106-362). This study will ensure that smaller aircraft that navigate using ground markers would be able to do so without interference from the airport. In addition, the law requires the Federal Aviation Administration “in consultation with the Secretary (of the Interior)...to develop an airspace management plan...that shall, to the maximum extent practicable and without adversely impacting safety considerations, restrict aircraft arrivals and departures over the Mojave Desert Preserve in California” (Public Law 106-362).

Finally, the law requires the airport facility to meet all requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 prior to its construction. The Federal Aviation Administration in partnership with the Department of the Interior will complete the necessary studies that are required under this act. If it is determined that it is not possible to mitigate issues that arise from the legal provisions, then the land will revert back to the BLM and the county will be reimbursed.

Despite HR 1695’s passage into law, congressional and public opposition continued. California Senator Feinstein, sponsor of the legislation that established the Mojave National Preserve, indicated that while she was not completely opposed to the Ivanpah legislation, she was concerned about the airport’s potential impact on the preserve (Grove 1999). According to the
newspaper, she met with Nevada representatives Bryan, Reid and Berkely, and Gibbons, along with Randall Walker, the director of the CCDA in Clark County. In this meeting, congressional representatives and Walker addressed each of Feinstein’s concerns. It is not clear whether her issues were mitigated. Reid was quoted in this article saying, “She'll come along, I'm sure” (Grove 1999).

Don Young (D-Alaska) was not immediately supportive of the legislation, according to this same article. Gibbons reportedly “privately urged (Young) to support the bill. Young agreed” (Grove 1999). There is no official evidence that describes covert negotiations made behind closed doors.

State Power in the “End Around”

Although it appears that pluralistic endeavors were present in the Ivanpah legislation, I argue that these efforts were minimal due to the existence of a bureaucratic state. According to state-centered theory, the state's organizational structure allows state officials to assume ultimate authority and to wield power in political outcomes. In research on the New Deal, Skocpol (1995) suggests that even though capitalistic interests may have played some role in the passage of legislation during the New Deal, the evidence overwhelmingly points to pivotal state actors and their actions that enabled the program's passage. From the state-centered perspective, even though it may appear that outside groups may have some influence in policy outcomes, the prevailing power of the state holds the ultimate power in policy decision-making.
The complex, bureaucratic nature of the Ivanpah airport legislative process is yet another example supporting state-centered theory. Although Skocpol (1995) emphasized structure and organization as the elements that define state power, she noted that the state possesses "capacities" to exercise influence and authority. Capacities include military power, financial resources, and staff loyalty. In the case of the Ivanpah legislation, it is evident that state actors used a variety of mechanisms to exercise power and dominate the process. State actors utilized their position to influence the legislative outcome, as evidenced by Representative Hansen's amendments to allow for small aircraft to navigate using visual flight rules, and by the CCDA using the political clout associated with Senator Harry Reid to introduce the legislation. In addition, state actors (BLM, National Park Service, and the CCDA) took advantage of their organizational position within the state that gives them direct access to knowing when and how to provide testimony during congressional hearings. The overarching point is the state wins in the end; they get the land to build the airport.

The CCDA set the agenda when it began its pursuit to build a new airport for the Las Vegas Valley. Next, they intentionally chose legislative means to acquire the land for the new airport to circumvent public participation in the process. There was never any formal debate prior to the legislation about whether to build, nor was there public notoriety surrounding the issue. By the time the Ivanpah initiative was addressed in Congress, the question was never whether or not to build the airport. Instead the issue was how to go about granting the conveyance to the CCDA. The CCDA defined the need, set the agenda, and exercised an
"end around" approach to acquire the land they needed to build the airport. Some outside interest groups were able to express their concerns, and achieve some mitigation in the legislation; however, compared with the entire process as a whole, the state dominated and won in the end.

Who Benefits?

After a two and a half year life in Congress, the law accommodates some of the concerns raised by the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Park Service. Prior to the airport's construction, there will be airspace assessment studies conducted that shows how flight paths will avoid the Mojave Preserve. In addition, before construction begins, an Environmental Impact Study must be completed and approved by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Transportation in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act. Both of these concessions are a small victory for the environmental community. They achieved some mitigation that directly addressed the concerns they had regarding the Mojave Preserve.

The biggest victory goes to the CCDA because they achieved the right to buy the land to construct an airport. Their efforts in pursuing legislation paid off. Even though concessions were made to appease the environmental community and small aircraft pilots, these compromises were minor compared to what the CCDA achieved. From the beginning, the state (CCDA) sought to acquire land through the legislative process. In the end, they succeeded.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis provides a close look at power and politics involved in the Ivanpah Valley airport project. This development presents an opportunity to analyze how political power is wielded in southern Nevada. My sociological questions for this study are: Who was involved in the decision to build the airport? What was the process by which this decision was made? Were citizens able to participate? If so, in what ways? Who stands to benefit from the construction of the airport? And how might this understanding contribute to our knowledge of major growth and development decisions in southern Nevada?

In this case, I found that the state dominated the Ivanpah Valley airport decision. The CCDA's autonomous position within the Clark County government allowed them to define the need for the new airport and set the agenda so the question of whether to build a new airport was never asked in subsequent phases of the development. Moreover, they exercised an "end around" approach to acquire the land needed for the airport, which eliminated established citizen participatory measures in the process. In the end, the Department of Aviation, using legislative means, successfully achieved the ability to acquire the land to pursue the airport project.
State Domination of the Ivanpah Valley

Airport Development

The evidence in this case supports state-centered assumptions about power, and reveals that both structure and agency allowed the state to control the initial decision to build the airport. The Clark County Department of Aviation determined that efforts to expand the existing airport facility would not be feasible or profitable. Therefore they decided that a new airport would have to be constructed to meet the increasing number of tourists arriving to Las Vegas by air. They made this decision independently, without apparent input from any outside interest group. They never offered the prospect to the citizens of Las Vegas for consideration nor did they seek input from any other related agency or interest group. In doing so, the Department of Aviation defined the need for the new airport, and set the agenda so that the issue of whether to build a new airport was never open for public debate.

Once the Department of Aviation decided that a new airport was needed for Las Vegas, they had to decide where to locate the new airport. After eliminating several possibilities due to natural and physical constraints, aviation officials decided on the Ivanpah Valley. As with the decision to build a new airport, their authority allowed them to decide where to locate the new airport autonomously, without outside input. However, there were many who were opposed to the airport's location.

The primary reason that people did not want the airport in the Ivanpah Valley is because of its close proximity to the Mojave National Preserve. Park
supporters and environmentalists were concerned that the airport will negatively impact the desert landscape and wildlife that exist in that region. In addition, they fear that noise, light, and air pollution will interfere with the visitor experience at the park. These are legitimate concerns, yet these views were not considered in the decision to locate the airport in the Ivanpah Valley. None of the affected parties, including the Bureau of Land Management who owns the land, the Mojave National Preserve, business interests, nor the citizens who live in the area were involved in the location decision. The Department of Aviation autonomously decided to locate the airport in the Ivanpah Valley without seeking input from anybody else.

The state dominated the decision to build the airport, and the decision to locate it in the Ivanpah Valley. Once these decisions were made, the Department of Aviation set out to acquire the land they needed to construct the airport. The Department of Aviation utilized what I call the “end around” approach, which refers to using legislative means to acquire the land for the airport, rather than following existing, standard procedures of land acquisition. The end around approach eliminated avenues for public involvement in the land acquisition process. They autonomously made the decision to circumvent established procedures by using the end around, which is arguably anti-democratic, just as they decided to build a new airport, and to locate it in the Ivanpah Valley.

With the introduction of the Ivanpah initiative in Congress, the state continued its domination over the project. The need for a new airport was never questioned.
or debated in the congressional arena. In addition, state actors were the only ones represented in the first round of congressional testimony. The state dominated the testimony given and the range of issues that were addressed. There was private interest group testimony given in the second round of congressional testimony; however, these efforts produced only minor changes in the legislative language. In the end, the Clark County Department of Aviation was successful and was able to purchase the land, with little opposition or notoriety.

Class-Based Aspects in the Ivanpah Case

This study has established that the state-centered model is an appropriate explanation of how the state controlled the Ivanpah development process, which served in the state's interests. However, class-based theorists understand that the distinction between elite and state actors is not necessarily apparent. State officials often make decisions that favor the dominant class because of the financial support they receive from economic elites. Class-based theorists' research has revealed strong ties between political actors and economic interests, ties that reach far beyond the office and into social circles and clubs. In fact, researchers have found that many political decisions are introduced and designed outside the office, and out of public scrutiny (Hunter 1953; Whitt 1982; Domhoff 1983). Class-based theorists conclude that state actors are not always acting in their own interests, but are directly influenced by economic elites in their political decisions.
Was there any behind the scenes financial support or other means of support given to state actors from economic elites in the Ivanpah case? No such evidence was found in the research. Even when Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA reported receiving some assistance from a private entity, he did not reveal its identity. Additionally, the CCDA reported that this private entity is no longer involved with the development, although this fact has not yet been substantiated.

Despite the lack of material evidence in this case supporting class-based features of power and influence, I argue that in some instances state actors make decisions that coincide with the interests of the dominant economic class. In short, even though the state may act with relative autonomy, its decisions may also favor economic interests. Some go so far as to argue that a hegemony of economic growth interests are implicitly manifest in virtually all state decisions.

I can speculate about economic influence in the decision to build the Ivanpah Valley airport. The prevailing ideology of city growth, along with tourism, which is the major economic source in Las Vegas, both seem to be a factor in the decision to build Ivanpah. Numerous times in the local newspaper and in congressional testimony, airport and other federal officials allude to the growth of the city and tourism as the overriding factor contributing to the need for an additional airport to serve the Las Vegas area. It is reasonable to assume that those affiliated with casinos, restaurants, and other tourist attractions are interested in the ability to bring more visitors to the city. Local businesses and developers are likely interested in attracting more people to come to Las Vegas. Finally, city and county officials will benefit from steady growth rates that both
maintain and increase their tax base. Growth and tourism were undeniably the catalyst for a new airport, but the evidence lacks visible business interests influencing the state in its decision to build the Ivanpah Valley airport.

Pluralist Aspects in the Ivanpah Case

In the Ivanpah airport development, we have seen state domination over the process. Yet, when examining those involved in the legislative phase, it could be argued that pluralism is supported by the presence of competing interest groups in the process that had some minimal effect on the decision outcome. During the Ivanpah legislation there were opposing interests competing to influence the decision outcome, with Congress mediating. During the 105th Congress, the Department of Aviation and the Bureau of Land Management held opposing viewpoints. The Bureau of Land Management opposed the legislation that required them to release land to the Department of Aviation for the airport’s development. They had multiple reasons for their opposition, including conflicting land use patterns and dissatisfaction with the terms regarding the land purchase. Both agencies utilized the congressional arena to pursue their policy interests.

During the 105th Congress there were opposing interests and these conflicting interests continued into 106th Congress. The Department of Aviation testified again on behalf of its efforts to acquire land for the airport. The National Park Service and the National Parks Conservation Association provided testimony against the legislation citing potential negative impacts to the Mojave Desert.
Preserve. Some congressional members agreed, and they openly opposed the legislation. Other delegates sustained their support of the legislation.

Congressional testimony is intended to ensure that all sides of an argument are justly considered before making a policy decision. Ostensibly, each interest group in the Ivanpah case had equal access to express their issues via congressional testimony. State agencies have an advantage with using congressional testimony because they are already connected in the process. Those state agencies directly involved in legislation, such as the Department of Aviation, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service, generally have advanced knowledge of a congressional hearing. State-centered theorists would agree that the structure of the state allows for state agencies to have greater access to the congressional arena.

However, pluralists would maintain that the state doesn’t have as much of an advantage as state-centered theorists contend. Experienced environmental organizations monitor congressional happenings and legislative events that are pertinent to their causes. They employ watchdogs who learn about important legislative events to find out when, or if, congressional testimony will take place. As with the Ivanpah legislation, environmental groups learned about the proposed hearing, and then obtained permission to testify by contacting their congressional representatives or their aids. It helped that these groups had pre-established relationships with congressional officials. When the need arose, their access to the legislative arena was easier than if they did not network with congressional officials. Pluralists would argue that interest group organizations
and relations with congressional officials are some of the resources used to influence legislation. Even though the state may have direct access to influence policy, pluralists contend that other groups have just as much of an opportunity to impact legislation.

In addition to the testimony provided by interest groups and state agencies, there were other players who attempted to influence the legislation using strategies other than congressional testimony. Environmental activists from local southern Nevada organizations were vocal with their local congressional aids to achieve some mitigation measures. Representatives from the Sierra Club and Red Rock Audubon successfully negotiated reversionary language in the legislation that ensured that the land would revert to federal ownership should the airport not be constructed.

Negotiation with congressional aids is another method of impacting legislation. In the case of Ivanpah, environmental groups utilized pre-established relationships with congressional aids to negotiate their interests into the legislative initiative. Pluralists would argue that negotiation is another resource used by interest groups to influence public policy. Through lobbying, various organizations take advantage of relations made with congressional delegates in order to express their interest. And in the case of Ivanpah, they were successful in some of their attempts to influence the legislation; therefore, in the pluralist worldview, it can be argued that outside interest groups held some degree of power.
The pluralists would argue that the Ivanpah legislation supports their claims. It is clear that there were conflicting interests, and several different interest groups participated and attempted to influence the legislation using various tactics. Based on the presence of competing interests during the legislation, and the mechanisms employed to influence the outcome, pluralist assumptions about who governs are evident in the Ivanpah legislation.

Yet, even though pluralist aspects are evident, I argue that ultimately, the Ivanpah legislative process still manifests much state control. In state-centered theory, the state is the predominant actor controlling policy decisions. State-centered theorists recognize that outside interest groups may also appear to be involved, but their claims do not hold the same weight as state interests. The state ultimately makes decisions with relative autonomy that benefit state actors and interests. In this case, the organizational capacity of the state allowed for state actors (Clark County Department of Aviation) to assume authority in decision outcomes. Even though there were competing interests in the Ivanpah legislation, their issues were not considered evenly. Instead, state interests were given precedence in the congressional arena because the Department of Aviation had already set the agenda in previous stages of the development that a new airport was needed. The issue of whether or not to build was not considered during the legislative process, thus minimizing the full range of issues available for congressional debate.

There is an important methodological point to be made here. That pluralist and state-centered aspects can both be seen here reveals that conceptual
interpretations are contingent on the time frame analyzed. The point at which analysis begins is crucial to how we understand which theory applies in the Ivanpah case. If this analysis were to examine only the legislative phase, then it seems that pluralism could be an even stronger theoretical explanation of this case. However, since analysis begins at the point when the airport was a brand new concept in the minds of the Department of Aviation, state-centered assumptions of power are prevalent. When analyzing each phase of the airport development (the conceptual beginnings, the location decision, and the process of acquiring the land), then considering them as a whole, state-centered theory is the most useful explanation for this case.

Citizen Participation and Democracy

On one level, this case seeks to answer questions about land development decisions in southern Nevada. I have answered these questions by suggesting that the Department of Aviation was the predominant entity controlling the decision to build the airport. Their position within the county government enabled them to make this decision autonomously. In doing so, aviation officials defined the need for a new airport and set the agenda so the question of whether to build an airport was never a public issue. In addition, they intentionally employed means that elided democratic processes in the land purchase needed for the project. In the end, the Department of Aviation was successful in their efforts to build a new airport.
At the center of the theoretical argument is the issue of democracy. What does the evidence in this case study reveal about democracy in southern Nevada? Is the political process in southern Nevada representative of a truly democratic process? In the democratic worldview, the state's job is to govern in the interests of the people and to carry out their wishes. Yet, state-centered theory suggests that the state governs in its own interests and does not fully consider the wishes of its constituents. If this perspective holds true with the Ivanpah Valley airport, do we have a democracy?

If democracy is defined as open and equal access to participation in policy making, some say that we do not have a democracy at all. Kantor and David (1988) argue that the decision making process is not open for public participation. They argue that the government engages in techniques to shield the public from full participation by providing structured arenas for public input, which keeps citizens somewhat isolated from political procedures so the government can proceed with initiatives that protect privileged positions (both economic and political). Similarly, Livojevic and Cornelius (1998) also found that citizens do not have a voice in policy making. They conducted a case study in Maryland measuring the amount of citizen input in a decision to locate a juvenile facility within their community. The citizens reported that they were not involved in the initial decision for placement of the facility, and once that decision was made, there was little they could do about it.

Like these and other studies, the Ivanpah case reveals a lack of public notoriety, as well as involvement, in the airport development decision. Instead,
state actors assumed authority and made the decision to build the airport without any public consideration. In addition, they circumvented established processes that would have allowed citizens to express their views during the land acquisition phase of development. Considering the evidence, there was no public participation in the Ivanpah Valley airport development process. It seems that democracy, in the form of citizens being able to have a voice in major decisions that affect their lives, is questionable in the Ivanpah Valley airport decision.

What might the Ivanpah case look like if there were enhanced citizen involvement? First, the Department of Aviation would have sought outside input as to whether to build the airport in the first place. Second, they would have utilized standard land acquisition procedures put in place to involve the public, rather than executing an end around approach that intentionally eliminated citizen feedback. Instead of concluding that a new airport was necessary based solely upon city and tourist growth projections, they may have had to consider many other factors raised by citizens, such as water concerns, potential increases in air pollution, how to transport people to and from the new airport, where new residents will live, and whether the city can support new growth. In addition, aviation officials would have recognized that although they are experts, citizens are experts too. Even though some argue that citizens may “render flawed judgments...experts make mistakes too” (Sclove 1995:48). Sclove contends that laypersons have insight to offer that experts may not have considered. Perhaps aviation officials would not have intentionally omitted citizen
feedback, but would have considered their input useful for making an informed decision (see Fiorino 1990; Fischer 1993; Laird 1993; Sclove 1995).

Some have described the way participatory mechanisms could look in a more democratic society. Laird (1993) describes a situation called participatory analysis, where the discourse regarding a particular policy or decision covers the full range of issues. Consideration includes the expert opinions of not only those in charge of the decision, but also those that may be directly affected by the outcome, and even those that are not. More education and more discussion can result in an informed resolution, rather than an outcome derived from a narrow set of ideas and interests. Fischer (1993) agrees, emphasizing the importance of “bringing the ‘local knowledge’ of the community to the scientific establishment” (p. 182). Problem-solving by collaboration results in a decision-making process that is more democratic and less supportive of top-down power structures.

Both Laird and Fischer refer to complex technological policy decisions; land development decisions are comparable and just as crucial. They have similar repercussions as do technological decisions. Impacts of the Ivanpah Valley airport include effects on the immediate surrounding areas, such as Goodsprings and the Mojave National Preserve. It will also produce more widespread effects, including a growth trajectory down I-15 and other areas, increased air pollution, contribution to a water shortage problem, and it will bring in more people to Las Vegas, as history has already proved. For instance, airport and city officials have begun to project how the airport will affect the immediate area surrounding the airport, specifically the impact on the neighboring town of Goodsprings. One
Clark County official noted, “Goodsprings see(s) the Ivanpah airport as a real threat to their rural quality of life.” Dennis Mewshaw of the CCDA noted, “It’s a community that clearly will in the next decade will probably be transformed...(to) basically a little town.” “Those rural communities would potentially explode in population” according to Phil Guerrero, spokesperson for the BLM Las Vegas field office. Regarding the Mojave National Preserve, Dennis Schramm described his reaction to the new airport in this way, “Our initial reaction from the very beginning was that this was a bad thing for the preserve…it means noise for visitors…noise for wildlife.”

As Las Vegas history has revealed, the new airport will likely contribute to an ever-increasing population in the city. A new airport will create the opportunity to bring more visitors to the city. More tourists mean that more casinos and other tourist-related facilities would be built. A growth in the service industry will attract more people to employ these businesses, resulting in more people moving to the city. People will live not only near the airport, but will also continue to move to and expand the Las Vegas Valley. A growth in population will contribute to the diminishing air quality associated with construction and commute, and will strain the already depleting water supply for the Southwest. Finally, an increase in the number of Las Vegas residents will contribute to sprawl development patterns, especially along the I-15 corridor south to the Ivanpah Valley.

With all these potential impacts for the Las Vegas Valley that stem from the new airport, it is seems reasonable to think that citizens and interest groups should have been consulted in the decision to build a new airport. “Citizens can
and must be active participants in local policy decisions that affect their lives” (Livojevic and Cornelius 1998:207). Without a civic culture, or participatory mechanisms, we are in danger of losing certain rights and freedoms to which we are entitled. Citizens have a right to participate in decisions that affect their everyday lives. They have a right to monitor both public policy and those responsible for its implementation. Residents have a right to voice concern on what happens near their homes and in their communities. Finally, we all have a right to live in a healthy environment.
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Let's talk general first. What can you tell me about Ivanpah airport?
   • Your general knowledge about it
   • Your role in its development
   • How are you involved?

2. What stage is the project currently in?

3. What is the general sequence of events for the airport, from beginning to end?
   • What significant processes are left?

Origins of the airport proposal
1. Who initially deemed it necessary to build a new airport?
   • Where did the proposal come from?
   • Dept. of Aviation? McCarran airport? County planners/commission?

2. What factors generated the proposal for a new airport?
   • Forecasted numbers
   • Long term predictions

3. Where there any initial feasibility/market studies conducted with regard to a new airport?
   • By whom and when?
   • What factors did they consider?

4. When was the decision made to build an airport?

5. Were other ideas considered in alternative to a new airport? If so, what were they?

Airport location siting:
6. By what process (how) did they come to the decision to locate in the Ivanpah valley?

7. Who decided on the current location in the Ivanpah valley?

8. Did this process of deciding on a location include feasibility/impact studies?
   • What factors did they consider?
   • Who conducted these studies?
   • When were these studies conducted?

9. When was the location decision made?
   • Approximate date
10. Has there been any discussion of building a similar airport in other places?
   - Southern Utah, California
   - Mesquite

11. If so, is this discussion still happening? Who has been (or is) involved in the dialogue regarding this idea?
   - Pros and cons of each place's citing

**Initial approval of the airport:**
12. Once the decision on the site was made, what was the next step in the process?

13. Has the state been involved in this process? If so, in what ways? What departments?

14. At what point did County Commission give their approval?
   - In what form/fashion did the approval take place?
   - Was there any dissension among the commissioners?

15. Who else had to approve the Ivanpah proposal?

16. Was anybody opposed to the siting initially? If so who were they?
   - Why were they opposed?
   - Are they still opposed?

**Federal/Congressional role/intervention:**
17. What is the official name and congressional reference number of the Ivanpah bill?

18. When and where was the Ivanpah bill first introduced?

19. Who was most active in sponsoring the bill, or making sure that the bill remained up for consideration?

20. Who favored and who opposed the bill?

21. How did the bill change and evolve over time while active in Congress?
   - What compromises, negotiations, or substitutions were made?
   - Wasn't it part of an omnibus bill?
   - Any agreements reached "off the record?"

22. Can you outline or describe the sequence that the bill followed through Congress?
   - Include significant dates of approvals or defeats
23. Why did it have to go through Congress for the land to be released for sale?
   - Is this normal?
   - What would have been the normative process for acquiring the land?

Development of the airport:
24. Are there any more impact or feasibility studies that will be conducted?
   - Air space, environmental
   - Marketing
   - Preliminary design
   - Get descriptions of each (who, when, what factors will be considered)
   - Do these pose any obstacles/foreseeable problems?

25. Who will be involved with the airport in future stages of the development?

Citizen involvement:
26. Has there been any citizen input in the process for developing Ivanpah airport thus far?

27. What mechanisms are available to citizens to contribute their input/feedback on the airport?

28. What is the general consensus of citizens toward the airport?
   - How do we know what the consensus is?

29. Which citizens have input on the Ivanpah airport project?
   - Local (Jean and Primm) versus Las Vegas

Organized opposition:
30. Are there currently any organized groups opposed to the airport?

31. If so, what are the reasons for opposition?

Airport perspectives:
32. What is your perspective on the impact this airport has on the Las Vegas Valley?

33. How do you see this playing out?

34. What are the expected benefits of building the Ivanpah airport?

35. What are the potential consequences of building the airport?

36. Who else has insight on this? Can you recommend anyone else whom I can talk to?
REFERENCES


VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Amy Walker

Local Address:
5420 Regal Peak Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Home Address:
2658 Knob Creek Land
Knoxville, TN 37912

Degree:
Bachelor of Science, Sociology, 1995
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga

Thesis Title: Power and Political Process: The Case of the Ivanpah Valley Airport

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Robert Futrell, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Barbara Brents, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Ron Smith, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Michael Bowers, Ph. D.