The Geographic Dimensions of Day Labor Conflict
in the San Diego Metropolitan Area

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Geography

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on the spatial organization and operation of immigrant
day-labor markets, as well as the socio-spatial relationships between hiring sites and
their surrounding neighborhoods that sometimes generate serious community
conflicts. The primary purpose of this research is to reduce or eliminate day-labor
conflicts at the local level through improved urban planning, community building
and education, and improved communication networks among laborers. The
geographic perspective is critical for this analysis, as planning for day labor activities
requires understanding how the markets work at multiple spatial scales.

This dissertation project uses geographic information systems (GIS) and
quantitative analysis in combination with qualitative research methods to explore the
geography of day labor markets in the San Diego Metropolitan Area. Specifically, it
examines the distribution and locational characteristics of day labor hiring sites and
the neighborhoods that support them.
Each day in the SDMA, approximately 1000 men look for work at one of the forty-five total day labor hiring sites located within the region. There is considerable diversity within the day-labor population; some hiring sites are used almost entirely by recent migrants to the area, while others are used by long-time residents of a variety of backgrounds. The diversity of day laborers increased as a result of the economic downturn that began in 2006; the lingering effects of which are still visible at the time of publication in 2012. Laborers across the region employ a locational strategy termed “strategic visibility” in their selection of hiring site locations, as well as their organization within day-labor spaces. Strategic visibility maximizes employment opportunities and accessibility to employers, while avoiding undesired attention and/or visibility. The fact that day labor hiring sites are located in neighborhoods where employment opportunities are greatest – those with high levels of employment in construction and agriculture, as well as higher than average numbers of owner-occupied homes – is evidence of this strategy at the regional scale.

This regional and neighborhood-level analysis is combined with street-level observation and ethnography to understand the ways that spaces of work and social reproduction are informally constructed, maintained, and altered by day laborers and other community members. The processes that generate day labor conflicts are particularly important for this study, and the analysis in this dissertation finds that so-called day labor conflicts often arise due to local crises that are unrelated to day-
labor activities. Furthermore, the actions taken by local governments and community groups to try and control day labor activities are costly and largely ineffective.

This dissertation demonstrates the importance of everyday urban rhythms on day labor activities and the ways that negotiations for control of space connect laborers and local stakeholders to each other and to particular hiring sites. Only by acknowledging these relationships and processes that connect laborers to particular spaces and incorporating them into day-labor support efforts, can local government and community groups implement policies that protect laborers and ensures that day-labor activities do not inhibit other community members from using urban spaces in the most productive manner as well.
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Preface

In the town where I grew up there was a city-sponsored day labor site. It was about as basic as formal hiring sites get. There was a fenced off area where laborers could hangout while they waited for a job. Employers would pull off the street into the driveway for the site and the men would negotiate their wage on the spot. The hiring site had a few amenities: a covered area where the men could get out of the sun, portable toilets (the most important amenity for any hiring site), and a basketball hoop. As a teenager, I was not particularly politically or socially conscious, and probably could not have told you what the purpose of the site was. I knew of the place because it was a few blocks from my childhood home, and my family drove past it on the way to church.

I came to be interested in day labor because of a community conflict related to this hiring site near my parents’ home in Houston, Texas. The conflict began after the City of Houston opened a recycling center on the land adjacent to the long-standing day labor hiring site. Soon after the recycling center opened, the city began to receive complaints from women who felt intimidated on their way to drop off their recyclables by the large groups of Hispanic men who congregated in and around the hiring site. The result of that conflict was the closure of the city-sponsored day labor site. Unfortunately for the intimidated women, the site closure did not cause the laborers to cease waiting for work along Westpark Blvd. In fact the gauntlet of intimidation that each woman must endure has been extended because in
the absence of a designated space for waiting and hiring, the laborers have spread out along the road. Today, the informal day labor market on Westpark Blvd is over a mile long, stretching east to west from South Rice Blvd. to the I-59 overpass.

Watching this conflict unfold on television and in my neighborhood, I was struck by two things. The first was that during debates regarding the future of the day labor site, there was almost no input from the laborers themselves. The future of their workplace, as it were, was being decided for them. *It seemed that they were completely disempowered.* However, the elimination of the formal space for the laborers did nothing to stop their pursuit of employment. In some ways, it freed them to move up and down the street in search of better locations for their daily congregation. So my impression was partly invalid. *I underestimated the resilience of the laborers.* The second point that struck me was that the actions taken by the city in an attempt to remove the men had *exactly the opposite of their intended effect.* It was clear that the city had taken action against the laborers without understanding men’s situation. They took action that altered the nature of urban space without understanding the way that place *worked* (Mitchell 2003). The ineffective actions taken by the city against day laborers showed the powerlessness of city officials to control space under their jurisdiction.

I later came to realize that the tension and community angst regarding day laborers was not unique to my hometown. Nor was the ineffectual government response to the problem. In fact, day labor hiring sites were increasingly viewed as problematic in cities throughout the United States. This led to two important sets of
questions that have directed my research and professional life for the past seven years. First, why do some communities view day labor as a problem while others do not? And second, what can be done to eliminate conflict that arises as a result of day labor activities? As I embarked on my MA thesis research, full of equal parts naiveté and arrogance, I was sure that I could definitively answer these questions in two years. That proved not to be the case.

Now some six years later, this dissertation answers those two critical questions and provokes new ones. My dissertation project was both professional and emotional labor. It brought me great happiness and challenged my own views on what constituted ethical or appropriate social interaction. It is my serious hope that readers’ experience some of the emotional highs and lows as they move through the dissertation.
1. Introduction

1.1. Background: Contemporary Day Labor Markets

Life as a day laborer in San Diego is not easy. Every morning day laborers, also known as jornaleros, travel to particular public and semi-public spaces where they wait for mostly short-term jobs: providing manual labor or general handyman services for homeowners, construction and landscaping companies, and a variety of other low to medium-skill jobs (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). The majority of laborers in San Diego congregate at informally designated hiring spaces on sidewalks and the edges of parking lots. The laborers who wait at these informal hiring sites are exposed to the elements, which despite San Diego’s notoriously comfortably climate, can reach extremes of heat and cold, especially in the eastern parts of the metropolitan area. Laborers at many sites must manage without regular access to restroom facilities, or protection from the sun during long periods spent waiting for work. Day laborers are also often subject to vigilante and race-based crimes (Claffey 2006; Valenzuela Jr. 2006a; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). For these laborers, the alternative in some cases is to seek work at one of the three formal, or regulated sites in the region. These centers provide restroom access, shade, and other extremely basic amenities that informal sites often lack. The formal centers also provide some degree of structure to the hiring process, which protects laborers from some workplace abuses. The structured hiring process also protects laborers from vigilantism, as all employers are required to sign in before hiring their help for the
day. Perhaps most remarkably, day laborers at formal and informal sites alike must endure these difficult circumstances for an opportunity to find work that rarely leads to above poverty level incomes over the course of a year (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006).

In the United States, day laborers have gained national attention and notoriety, not because of the work they do, but rather because the majority of day laborers are undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America (Valenzuela Jr. 2006a; Varsanyi 2008a). The public nature of the way they look for work stands in stark contrast to the more commonly articulated image of undocumented immigrants “living in the shadows” (Chavez 1998). As a result, the term day laborer is popularly understood as roughly synonymous with “illegal immigrant” in the United States (Varsanyi 2008a). This public definition is so complete that recent anti-immigrant legislation passed in Arizona SB1070 included special provisions intended to criminalize day labor activity (Senate Bill 1070 2010).

A nationwide survey of day laborers conducted in 2004 found that the majority of day laborers in the United States are immigrants, with Latino immigrants representing the largest ethnic group within the day labor population. Sixty percent of day laborers were born in Mexico, twenty-eight percent were from countries in Central America, and seven percent of day laborers were born in the United States (many of whom are ethnically Latino as well). Approximately seventy-five percent of the day laborers in the United States were undocumented immigrants. These statistics support the stereotypical connection between day labor and illegal immigration in the United States; however to end the analysis there ignores the
complexity of day labor activities. The data make clear that there exists considerable diversity within the day labor population in terms of ethnicity, age, tenure in the United States, as well as immigration status. It is also important to note that there is considerable variation in the demographic makeup of hiring sites regionally (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006) and even within a particular metropolitan area (Crotty 2007). There is further evidence that the number of United States citizens engaging in day labor work has increased during the economic downturn from 2007 to 2011 (Bazar 2009).

In this dissertation, day labor is studied as an economic and social activity at the regional scale. Immigration laws and policy are not the focus of the dissertation; they are addressed only in the ways that they influence day labor markets in San Diego County. This is important because eliminating day labor conflicts will not affect immigration, documented or otherwise, at the national scale. And passing comprehensive immigration reforms would not eliminate day labor activities throughout the country; it would reduce divisions within the day laborer population, but would not eliminate the industry as a whole. The separation between immigration studies and day labor research is important and directly tied to the scale of each issue. Even if every person who sought employment as a day laborer was an undocumented immigrant, the entire day labor population would comprise only one percent of the approximately twelve million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2010). Clearly day laborers receive a disproportionate level of attention and scrutiny from the media and public. So why is
day labor a lightning rod for conflict in communities throughout America? Or more accurately: Why does day labor generate conflict in some neighborhoods, cities, or states, but not others? These are some of the questions that I begin to answer in this dissertation. In particular, I will demonstrate the importance of geographic perspectives for understanding both day labor markets and the conflicts that sometimes occur surrounding day labor activities.

1.1.1 What are Geographic Perspectives?

Geographic perspectives are sets of theories and research methods that geographers use to analyze a problem and present findings. In the most basic geographic analysis, geographers observe and map spatial distributions of their subject of interest, in my case – day labor hiring sites. The real challenge for geographic analysis comes next when the researcher must answer the questions: Why is this located here? How long has it been located here? And, what must happen so that it can continue to exist here? The answers to these questions demand understanding a myriad of human and environmental processes and how those processes affect the research subject(s), and how the research subjects affect the processes in return.

The concept of space is crucial for understanding those relationships because all processes – social, cultural, environmental, or economic, and so on – area mediated across space. Addressing deep social issues like poverty, segregation, sustainable development, or habitat preservation each require a different expertise, but effective
planning for any of these issues requires a spatial awareness that comes from the geographic perspective. In fact, the argument that “space matters” is now increasingly accepted within the social and natural sciences. This has led to what many are calling the “spatial turn” within the social sciences, as researchers in sociology, economics, anthropology, and other disciplines increasingly incorporate geographic theory into their work (Soja 2010). To date, however, day labor research remains almost entirely a-spatial, which I argue has limited the effectiveness of nearly all attempts to manage day labor issues throughout the United States. Beginning to address this failure of perspective and improve day labor support and management efforts is the primary objective of this dissertation.

1.2 Objectives of the Dissertation

The overarching research question in this dissertation is how does a focus on the geographic dimensions of day labor inform our understanding of day labor-community conflicts? To answer this research question this dissertation presents a multi-method investigation of the geographies of day labor in the San Diego Metropolitan Area (SDMA), organized around three general research objectives. Collectively, the findings provide a more complete geographic understanding of day labor and day labor conflict.

The first objective of this dissertation is to understand the geographic factors which affect the distribution and size of informal hiring sites in the San Diego day labor market. There are several key geographic questions related to this objective:
Where are day labor sites? Why are they in these locations? How long have they been in this location? Answering these questions requires attention to the distribution and size of informal hiring sites in the SDMA, as well as the site and situational characteristics of those sites. To date, research investigating the distribution of informal day labor hiring sites at the metropolitan scale simply does not exist, and published data regarding common situational characteristics of informal hiring sites are generalized such that the data provide almost no explanatory power. In chapter two I examine the locational characteristics of hiring sites in San Diego County, highlight the spatial patterns in the distribution of hiring sites, and provide an improved framework for spatially-aware analysis of day labor hiring sites within a region.

The second objective of this dissertation is to explore the socio-spatial relationships between day laborers and stakeholders, and specify the particular socio-spatial arrangements that lead to community conflict. More simply, I begin to answer the question of why conflict occurs in some cities or neighborhoods and not others, and I highlight factors that are most important for creating day labor conflicts. At the most basic level, day labor conflicts are locational conflicts in which various stakeholders have competing ideas about how, and by whom, particular spaces in a community should be used. Chapters four through six address this process directly and illustrate how the presence of a day labor hiring site, or day laborers as residents, affects stakeholders’ daily experiences and spatial practices in a particular neighborhood. By examining the micro-geographies of individual day labor sites,
this dissertation focuses on the details of stakeholders’ lived spatial experiences around day labor, or the “encounter spaces” of day labor (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001). Through micro-geographic analysis, this dissertation identifies which types of encounters lead to wider community conflict.

The third objective of this dissertation is to examine how geographic factors affect the way in which communities plan for (or against) day labor, as well as the effectiveness of particular management strategies. Day labor hiring sites pose a number of logistical, political, and economic challenges for city governments. Presently there are limited policy options available to local governments and communities dealing with day labor conflict. The first day labor management strategy available to local governments is what Don Mitchell calls the annihilation of space (2003). The goal of this strategy is to remove day laborers from existing hiring sites and prevent them from congregating in other spaces within the municipality’s jurisdiction. To accomplish this goal, groups use a number of methods to change the nature of spaces where day labor activity exists, making it more difficult for laborers to engage in the behaviors required to seek work in a particular area. The second option for day labor management available to local governments and communities is to create a formal space for day labor congregation and hiring within the community. The establishment of a workers’ center is the most common method of formalizing space and has proven effective at addressing many of the common complaints regarding informal hiring sites (Camou 2002; Crotty and Bosco 2008; Toma and Esbenshade 2001; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). The final and most common method of
day labor management is for local governments to not take any action, thus leaving day labor formally unmanaged.

Existing research does an adequate job of documenting the various methods of annihilation (legal, police, and/or vigilante actions) and formalization (city or NGO sponsored formal hiring sites) that some communities have used to try and manage day labor activities (Camou 2002; Crotty and Bosco 2008; Esbenshade 2000; Varsanyi 2008a). Unfortunately, there has been no examination of the geographic variation in day labor-management approaches. This dissertation will show that in most cases, municipal governments in San Diego County choose to leave day labor formally unmanaged except during periods of economic or political crisis. I subsequently argue that the manner in which a particular municipality attempts to manage day labor is related to the social geography of each area and the identity politics of their most powerful constituent or stakeholder groups. Finally, I evaluate the “effectiveness” of particular attempts to manage day labor in the San Diego Metropolitan Area and demonstrate how the socio-geographic situation of each formal intervention influences its effectiveness.

1.3 Empirical Focus – San Diego Metropolitan Area

Centered on the city that is its namesake, the San Diego Metropolitan Area (SDMA) is comprised of eighteen municipalities covering nearly 4200 square miles and containing 3.1 million residents (sandag.org). It stretches north from the US-Mexico border to the Camp Pendleton Marine Base, which acts as a buffer between the northern parts of San Diego County and the southernmost extent of the Los
Angeles Metropolitan Area. The SDMA is located in the western half of the San Diego County, the eastern half of which is sparsely populated desert and mountain terrain (See Figure 1-1 and 1-2). The SDMA is a particularly good location for research on day labor conflict for several reasons. On a given day there are at least forty-five active day labor hiring sites in the SDMA. These sites exist in a variety of landscapes within each of the 18 municipalities within the SDMA. There is a well-established history of day labor conflicts in the region, and between the 18 municipalities in the metro area there are examples of governments currently employing each of the three most common approaches to day labor management. The diversity of day labor site types and management approaches utilized in the region provides a fertile environment for an investigation of how geographic factors influence the size and shape of day labor markets, as well as day labor conflicts. There are also a number of geographic factors unique to the San Diego Area which must be accounted for in local day-labor management policies, and serve to demonstrate the importance of systematic geographic analysis for adapting day-labor policies in other local contexts throughout the United States.
Figure 1-1: The San Diego Metropolitan Area (SDMA)
The history of day labor conflict in the region is closely tied to immigration issues, dating back to the early 1980’s (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994; Esbenshade 2000). Community tensions related to day labor and immigration issues vary
between municipalities and even neighborhoods in the SDMA. In 2006 for example, the mayor of a suburban municipality in southern San Diego County officially declared his city to be immigrant friendly, only weeks after a city in the northern part of the county passed a law that criminalized renting housing to undocumented immigrants. The anti-immigrant housing law was later found to be unconstitutional but provides a good example of how divergent sentiments toward immigration issues are in the county.

Eisenstadt and Thorup characterize San Diego residents’, by which they mean white residents, reaction to Mexican immigrants as “resignation and quiet resentment” which occasionally reaches boiling points, during which it would be difficult to characterize local residents as “quiet” (1994, p.3). This dissertation is unlikely to solve the underlying tensions and “quiet resentment” among groups in the SDMA. It can, however, help to identify the geographic triggers that cause quiet resentment to escalate to full-blown conflict and demonstrate how pro-active planning can help to reduce the instances when day labor sites become flash points for community conflict.

1.3.1 Day Labor and Conflict in the San Diego Metropolitan Area

This study was conducted at the regional scale. The metropolitan region is increasingly the scale of economic competition, to the degree that prominent economic theorists from a variety of political and economic perspectives now argue that the region is a more relevant scale for economic analysis than the nation-state (Friedman 2007; Harvey 2005; Storper 1997). The region is the appropriate scale for
analysis of day labor markets and conflict for very practical reasons as well. The industries in which day laborers are most often hired are not “footloose” industries. That is to say, the services they provide cannot be easily moved to other areas. To be relevant for day laborers in San Diego, home construction or improvement projects must occur within an area that the laborers can reasonably reach on a daily basis. The same argument holds for agricultural labor, and even when hired as movers – laborers’ do not travel outside of the region to help people unpack. Where laborers can look for work is limited by the distance they can reasonably commute on a daily basis; these mobility constraints serve to limit the total area that a laborer could potentially look for work to the region and, in all likelihood, to some smaller portion of the metropolitan area.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section provides an overview of existing research on day labor markets, and situates this dissertation and day labor more broadly within recent changes to the global economy. The changes to the global economy have also driven considerable changes to the structure, regulation, and opportunities of contemporary cities. I draw on Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the “Right to the City” to provide an ethical and ideological foundation for evaluations of equity and justice in the context of contemporary day labor markets. Finally I position day labor within critical perspectives on race and community to establish a framework for examining the sometimes contentious community dynamics that surround day labor markets.
1.4.1 Day Labor Defined

According to Abel Valenzuela the term day labor is generally used to “convey a type of temporary employment that is distinguished by hazards in or undesirability of the work, the absence of fringe and other typical workplace benefits (i.e., breaks, safety equipment), and the daily search for employment” (2003, 308). He further distinguishes between formal and informal day labor. Formal labor includes all workers finding employment through private, for-profit temp agencies like Labor Ready. Formal day labor also includes individuals who find work through non-profit workers centers that are typically supported by municipal governments, community organizations, or labor unions. Informal day labor is “characterized by men (and in a few cases, women) who congregate in open-air curbside or visible markets… to solicit temporary work” (2003, 308).

The Day Labor Research Institute defines day laborers as “men who wait on corners to wait for temporary, short term, long-term, or full-time work. Unemployed workers seeking work by other means are not day laborers (although they may work temporary jobs through agencies or personal contacts), nor are homeless who stand in the same area as day laborers (but are not seeking work) (http://daylaborinfo.org/faq.aspx).

The definition that the Day Labor Research Institute used was compiled from a number of jornaleros who were asked to define day labor for themselves. As such it reflects the opinions and place-based challenges for laborers at the site where the survey took place. It, unfortunately, is inadequate as a working definition for day
labor research as a whole. First, it is too locationally specific: a great many day labor sites are not located on “street corners.” The second and more serious inadequacy is its requirement that to be a day laborer an individual must always look for work in the same manner, always be actively looking for work, and cannot be homeless. The inflexibility of the Day Labor Research Institute’s definition belies the diverse and creative strategies that low-income, contingent laborers use in their daily struggle for survival. This definition is not particularly useful in the context of research examining community dynamics and stakeholder perspectives on day labor spaces because few stakeholders react to the appearance or actions of an individual laborer. Stakeholders react instead to the appearance or issues caused by the entire group of people in and around a day labor hiring site.

The economic focus of the definitions used by Valenzuela and the Day Labor Research Institute are somewhat understandable since employment seeking is the primary basis for laborers congregating, and the hiring process at informal sites can create practical challenges which often lead to conflict with local residents, business owners, and community stakeholders. In the following passage, Abel Valenzuela describes the operation of an informal hiring site in Los Angeles, California.

An archetypical informal or curbside site would have between 30 and 40 men waiting expectantly for passerby in pickup trucks or vans. As a prospective employer arrives, groups of men crowd the vehicle and aggressively point to themselves and communicate their availability. Employers select the worker based on different criteria. If the employer is frequenting the hiring site for the first time, she/he will hire men based on ascribed characteristics such as size, ability to
communicate in English, or some other marker of human capital or work experience such as spotted white painter pants and work shirts in the case of an experienced painter (Valenzuela Jr. 2002; Worby 2002). Otherwise, employers returning to the same site look for men that have worked for them previously. Wages for the hour, for the day, or for the task are usually negotiated after the worker is selected. The negotiations usually takes place in the car en route to the job site, or shortly after the selection of the worker while still on the curbside. Further negotiation can take place at the work site if the job is larger or more difficult than originally described at the hiring site. Many employers add to the frantic atmosphere by vociferously stating their hourly rate of pay – a strategy used to undercut the going rate by bargaining with several workers, with the “winner” offering the lowest bid. This frenzied approach is common at informal sites (2003, p 318-319).

Valenzuela’s description of the normal operation of an informal hiring site is noteworthy because it reflects the common focus of day labor researchers and advocates on one specific activity – employment negotiations. It, unfortunately, neglects to describe the activities that comprise the majority of a jornalero’s day when employment negotiations are not taking place. One notable exception to the economic focus within day labor research is the work of Carolyn Pinedo-Turnovsky, which examines the socialization practices of laborers at the hiring site: how laborers network, support one another, and even play while they wait for work. In case study in New York City, she found that conflict between laborers and local businesses was based less on the activities associated with the hiring moment than on the activities that made up the bulk of the time at the site (Turnovsky 2006, 2004). Therefore, to
truly understand how social dynamics can lead to conflict in or around day labor sites requires understanding more than the purely economic activities of day laborers. It requires understanding the socio-spatial situation of day labor spaces. Day labor spaces are the activity areas in which jornaleros wait for potential employers, negotiate the terms of each job, eat, drink, socialize and otherwise spend the time in-between each employment negotiation. They are permeable, adaptable, and can be non-contiguous in some cases. The production of day labor spaces will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6. Because of the importance of day labor spaces and situated practices beyond work and hiring, I define day laborer as all people who occupy or otherwise use day labor spaces as part of their income generating or survival strategy. This definition stands in contrast to the common understanding of day labor as a purely economic activity; it better encapsulates the myriad of activities that occur in day labor spaces and allows for deeper analysis of the relationship between day labor spaces and the surrounding communities.

The bulk of day labor research today comes from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. This research is predominantly exploratory in nature, using surveys and interviews to create demographic and workplace data on the day labor industry (Gill 2001; Valenzuela, Kawachi, and Marr 2002; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Ethnographic projects like Turnovsky’s also provide insights into the daily operations and activity structures that exist at day labor sites (Malpica 2002; Turnovsky 2004, 2006; Wakin 2008). Others provide details focused on particular subjects such as anti-day labor violence (Claffey 2006; Valenzuela Jr. 2006b, 2006a;
Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006), the role of race in day labor conflicts (Crotty and Bosco 2008; Esbenshade 2000), or masculinity and injury reporting rates among jornaleros (Walter 2004). These types of research projects are invaluable in that they provide information on a population that is largely misunderstood in the popular imagination. However, the majority of day labor research to date pays insufficient attention to how geographic factors affect the day labor industry. This is a particularly conspicuous oversight given the inherently spatial nature of seeking work as an informal day laborer. There is perhaps no method of labor seeking in which success depends on a person’s being in the right location at the right time: employers know very little about the laborers who they are hiring and, therefore, view day laborers as effectively interchangeable (Valenzuela Jr. 2003a; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Therefore, the laborer with the best chance of being hired is the one who chooses the best location to seek work. From a geographic perspective, day laborers can be thought of as independent labor contractors who utilize locational strategies to improve their chances of finding employment on a given day. However, why jornaleros seek work in this manner and why they must employ such spatial strategies are the result of changes in the economy at a much larger scale.

1.4.2 Day Labor and Global Economic Restructuring

The last three decades have been marked by a fundamental change in the global economy, the transition from a “Fordist regime of accumulation and regulation to a new, post-Fordist regime” (Bryson et al. 1999, 11). The changes within the new
economy have not been driven solely by the shift in methods of production but also by the expansion of neoliberal policies at various scales. Neoliberalism is sometimes referred to as an umbrella term which is used to describe such a wide range of actions and policies that it can lose some of its explanatory power. For the purposes of this dissertation, neoliberalism refers specifically to state policies which collectively “extend market discipline, competition, and commodification throughout all sectors of society” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350). The hallmarks of the post-Fordist/Neoliberal era are the new economic spaces of “small-firm-based specialized flexible production and areas of high-technology development” (Bryson et al. 1999, 11), dismantling of the social wage through elimination of unions and social welfare programs, de-regulation of all sectors of the economy, decreased impediments/increasing speed of the flow of goods and capital (Harvey 2005), increased social controls on human mobility and behaviors (Mitchell 2003), and inter-urban/regional competition across the globe (Harvey 1989).

Down-scaling of regulation and social service supports is one element driving new “economic geographies,” which are characterized by inter-urban competition and the “re-emergence and reassertion of regional and local economies. As national boundaries come under greater strain in the face of globalization, widespread deregulation and new information technologies, so the salience of local and regional economies as loci of economic accumulation and social regulation has increased” (Bryson et al. 1999, 13). These new regional economies are connected to the global system through a system of networks, such that the new “globalized economy” can
be conceptualized as a “spaces of flows” between interconnected places (Castells 1989, 1996). The movement of commodities and capital dematerializes geography as they move across national borders, continents and oceans. However, capitalism’s need for a spatial fix (Harvey 1982, 2005, 2008) means that geographers are uniquely positioned to articulate how multiple processes such as deregulation and flexibilization are interdependent and act across scales to create particular effects which can be seen in place (Allen 2003; Herod 2001). As the second half of this section will demonstrate, the expansion of post-Fordist production schemes, the decline of unionization, the increase of consumer culture in the United States, and the expansion of free trade between the United States and Mexico has led to massive increases in day labor activities in the U.S. in the past 30 years.

Inter-urban/regional competition also generates new forms of governance and place-marketing. Local governments work to market themselves in terms of economic landscape as well as the cultural and lifestyle amenities available to investors and population groups deemed more desirable. The economic landscapes are made more attractive to industries through tax incentives, environmental deregulation, anti-union legislation and a host of other measures which lower the cost of business for industry (Harvey 2005). The cultural amenities and consumer lifestyles are supported by a low-wage, often immigrant dominated service sector, some of whose employment occurs informally (Sassen 2000). However, informal work is not limited to low-wage service sector. The flexibilization of production and labor under the post-Fordist regime has increased contingent, part-time and contract
based work in many sectors of the economy. These types of flexible, short-term labor arrangements are much more conducive to informality, even in high skill jobs like computer programming or accounting (Ellis, Wright, and Parks 2007).

In the United States, day labor has grown even more rapidly than other forms of non-standard employment over the past 30 years (Valenzuela Jr. 2003a). There are a number of broad trends in economic restructuring that have driven the growth of day labor: the decline in formal sector manufacturing and the general decline in unionized labor in the United States, the growth of a service-based economy, and the extension of free trade into Mexico and Central America (Sassen 1998; Valenzuela Jr. 2003a).

The decline of formal sector manufacturing work and the decline in unionized labor are often discussed together, though the processes that have driven both are not entirely identical. Many authors cite the decline in formal manufacturing work (which was a highly unionized profession) as a basis for the rise in informal economic activity globally (Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989; Sassen 2000; Valenzuela Jr. 2003a). However, it is difficult to find a causal relationship between the decline in formal sector manufacturing and the growth of day labor specifically in the United States. By virtue of their residence in the United States, day laborers (regardless of immigration status) are not part of the low-wage international labor force that formed at least part of the basis for the mass-exodus of formal sector manufacturing from the United States. Furthermore, day laborers are rarely hired for work in informal manufacturing establishments (i.e. textile sweatshops) which have
become the norm for meeting demand for specialized consumer goods (Sassen 2000), thanks in large part to the gendered division of labor (Gibson-Graham 2006). However, the decline of formal sector manufacturing is a large part of the overall decline in unionized labor in the United States, which is an important driver of day labor growth. Many of the jobs for which day laborers (very few of whom belong to a labor organization) are hired was done by members of a construction workers union (carpentry, electrician, plumbing, roofing, etc) in the past. In today’s economy, these jobs are more often filled informally and on a short term basis by day laborers (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Poitevin (2005) also found a high correlation between day labor site location and spatial concentrations of small construction firms (those with less than 10 full time employees) which lends support to the argument that newer and smaller construction firms hire day laborers for short-term work as a strategy to lower costs and compete with larger, more established firms. This fits well within neoliberal ideology which purports to extend free-market competition to all sectors of the economy and society more broadly (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005).

The growth of a service based economy has also helped to drive the growth of day labor in the United States. Expansions in service sector industries such as tourism, finance, and retail has led “to the creation of a tiered economy that includes services in the hotel, entertainment, cleaning, and food industries” (Valenzuela Jr. 2003a, 315). Though day laborers are rarely employed in these industries, they are also part of the lower tier of the service-based economy. In fact, the growth of day
labor corresponds with the growth in the number and type of general services available and demanded by those inhabiting the upper tiers of the economy. One example of this is the phenomenal growth in gardening and landscaping services throughout the United States (Ramirez and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2009), an industry in which more than 80 percent of laborers have found work (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Economic restructuring and the shift to a service sector economy has also led to higher rates of wage instability for individuals and families (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005). As a result, more people are turning to informal means of income generation, including day labor, during periods of reduced income from formal sector employment (Dohan 2003; Venkatesh 2006).

A geographic perspective is important for understanding informalization and the growth of day labor for a number of reasons. Perhaps the most significant strength of the geographic perspective is the understanding of the unevenness of restructuring processes and their effects. This unevenness is particularly important in studying the effects of economic restructuring because it allows for a focus on how individuals and groups use mobility as a survival strategy. Valenzuela (2001) argues that day laborers engage in a form of survivalist entrepreneurialism. This definition sits well alongside the neoliberal definition of labor which views labor power as a commodity to be bought and sold. The value of labor varies spatially due to differences in cultural, economic, and legal labor relationships or structures between locations (Castree et al. 2004). Laborers control where and when they choose to sell their labor. Valenzuela argues that day laborers use entrepreneurial ingenuity and agency
to place themselves in the location where there labor can be sold for the highest value (Valenzuela Jr. 2001). I agree with Valenzuela, but would add that under economic restructuring, all workers engage in this type of entrepreneurialism; however, for day laborers the importance of their mobility at multiple scales is more pronounced because their pursuit for the highest wage-value for their labor requires inter and intra-urban mobility and even international migration (Crotty 2007).

The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement on January 1, 1994, further integrated the economies of the United States and Mexico. NAFTA guaranteed free movement of goods and capital between the United States and Mexico but included no provisions for easing the movement of labor. This proved problematic as the increased integration of the two national economies created massive changes in the ability of low-income laborers in Mexico to make ends meet. The effects were felt in many industries on both sides of the border, and in an effort to reduce the financial risk facing their families and communities, many young Mexican men chose to follow migration routes to the United States that were established nearly 80 years prior with the Bracero program. Once in the United States these men would look for work that would provide income they could send to their families in Mexico (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). There is some anecdotal evidence that informal day labor acts as a gateway to more formal or regular employment for migrants who arrive in the United States without established social networks. For example, a survey of day laborers conducted in 2004 found that sixty percent of laborers had resided in the United States for fewer than five years –
twenty percent had resided in the United States for less than a year (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006).

It would be a mistake, however, to treat economic processes independently of the politics of international mobility that are also part of the neoliberal project. Better than 85 percent of day laborers are from Mexico or Central America (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). The expansion of free trade during the neoliberal era has been accompanied by a simultaneous closing down of cross-border movement of people. In the United States this is most notably done with the passing of Operation Gatekeeper in 1994 (Ellis 2006; Nevins 2002). Increasing security on the border did not stop or even slow the movement of Mexicans and Central Americans into the United States; however, it did increase the cost and difficulty of crossing, which led to decreased return migration from the United States (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Massey, Rugh, and Pren 2010). With more migrants living in the United States full time, competition for employment increased, thus leading to higher numbers of migrants seeking additional income informally as well as extending their search for employment over greater geographic areas (Winders 2012). The overall effect of this has been a shift in the geography of day labor.

Historically day labor was hired from skid-row and dock-side neighborhoods where low-income housing existed in cities, or from rural agricultural areas. The most significant change for day labor employment under economic restructuring in the United States has been the development and massive growth of the suburban landscape, within which there is great demand for day labor in construction and
landscaping industries, but tolerance for day laborers’ physical presence is often quite limited. The growth of suburbia affected the geography of day labor in two important ways. First, day laborers who might have sought work historically in skid rows or in close proximity to historical immigrant ghettos expanded their employment search areas to include areas they had not previously, like suburbia. Secondly, suburban sprawl overtook many areas from which agricultural day labor was hired. In these cases, which are particularly relevant in San Diego, the type of day labor work changed but the physical locations of the hiring sites did not. These changes will be discussed in greater depth in the second and sixth chapters.

1.4.3 DAY LABOR CONFLICTS AND THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY”

The rapid changes to economic structures that led to the growth of day labor over the past 30 years have also altered the very nature and purpose of cities in the United States. To paraphrase David Harvey (Harvey 2008), cities have shifted from being spaces that manage capitalist activities, to becoming economic entities themselves, competing with other urban areas to attract the most profitable industries and financially secure residents to their area. This competition has drastically altered lifestyles and most importantly has made “quality of life” a commodity, as well as the city itself (2008). As a commodity, “quality of life” must be protected from potential threats to its value. In American cities, the biggest threats to quality of life are elements (people, activities, and even signage) considered to be disorderly. The legal geographer Don Mitchell (1997, 2002, 2003) has spent much of his career
documenting the various ways that cities plan or react in an effort to eliminate or hide disorder in public spaces from the “general public.” His broad goal is to understand how the specific groups considered disorderly and how they are policed relates to larger issues of societal membership and legitimacy within a democracy. Specifically he seeks to understand “who has the right to the city and its public spaces. How is that right determined – both in law and on the streets themselves? How is it policed, legitimized, or undermined? And how does that right – limited as it usually is, contested as it must be – give form to social justice (or its absence) in the city?” (Mitchell 2003, 4)

The concept of the “right to the city” is drawn from the work of the French philosopher and urban theorist Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre believed that cities naturally create inequality, but that the solution to that inequality also depends on the city. He argued that guaranteeing the right to the city for all residents (denizens) was the best means of reducing inequality, not only in terms of financial wealth, but all other measures of quality of life.

The right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (citadin) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to use the center, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the “marginal” and even for the “privileged”). (Lefebvre 1996, 34) (Cited inSoja 2010, 99).
For Lefebvre urban spaces are produced through the dialectical tension between representations of space: abstract, planned and “rational” spaces, and representational spaces, which are the spaces of real life. Representational spaces are shaped by the daily routines of the city’s inhabitants and the things they care about (Allen 2003, 161). The tension between these two conceptualizations comes from their organizational principles. In representations of space, the way urban space is used is determined primarily by exchange-value; they represent capitalism’s vision for spatial organization and use. In contrast, the way space is used in representational spaces is determined by use-value; whatever denizen (or group of inhabitants) needs the space the most appropriates it in the manner they see fit. Critics of Lefebvre argue that his perspective is perhaps too influenced by Marxism in that he only recognizes two groups of inhabitants: the working class and the bourgeois aristocracy (who no longer “inhabit”) (Lefebvre 1996). From Lefebvre’s perspective, representational spaces are understood as working class spaces, and their re-appropriation can be understood as resistance to the dominance of bourgeois elites, or even capitalism itself. This perspective ignores the other lines by which society divides itself (e.g. race, religion, sexuality, gender) and, thereby, ignores the tensions that arise not only between representations of space, which are understood to be the preferred uses of space of the bourgeois aristocracy, but also the tensions regarding how different groups of inhabitants determine the best use-value for space. In beginning to address this problem, Mitchell adds another conceptualization of urban space that deals exclusively with public space: spaces for representation – the spaces
wherein “political movements can stakeout the territory that allows them to be seen (and heard)” (2003, 129). Spaces for representation are those places in the city where the disenfranchised or excluded can assert their right to the city, their right to inclusion, and their right to exist by virtue of their visible taking of space.

Over last 20 years urban spaces throughout the United States have undergone substantial changes that collectively serve to deny particular inhabitants the right to the city, and prevent visible political demonstration. These changes range from the increased privatization of public spaces (Mitchell 2003; Zukin 1995) to architectural designs meant to control activities (Ellin 1997) and the implementation of a host of new laws and designed new urban forms in the name of protecting the quality of life and/or the urban aesthetic from undesirable others (Beckett and Herbert 2010; Beckett and Herbert 2009; Herbert 2001, 2007; Herbert and Beckett 2010b; Herbert and Brown 2006). The targets of these new laws change according to context and are not limited to public spaces. New governance groups like Home Owners’ Associations (HOA’s) and Business Improvement Districts (BID’s) have emerged and wield substantial control of the use and appearance of privately owned spaces as well (Zukin 1995), thereby blurring the distinction between public and private spaces in the city (Kirby 2008). Though a city ban on homeless people sleeping in public parks and a HOA determining the colors a homeowner can paint his or her own home are quite different in terms of who is restricted and overall ethical significance (banning a life-dependent activity versus banning paint colors), the underlying logic is the same: aesthetic value must be protected and preserved by eliminating elements
that give the appearance of “disorder.” This shift represents a systematic prioritization of representations of space over representational spaces and spaces for representation. The effects of this reprioritization and reorganization of urban space has been incomplete for a variety of reasons, as I will show throughout this dissertation. The social implications of both sets of regulations above are of interest as well. By prohibiting particular activities, communities police the boundaries of social membership, and the message is clear: homeless people cannot be true members of this community, nor can people whose taste in paint colors differs from their Home Owners Associations.

Lefebvre’s notion of the right to the city articulates a vision of urban space and life wherein all residents may use the city to their best advantage and, perhaps more significantly, should not be disadvantaged by lack of access to the opportunities present in some parts of the city simply by virtue of their race, class, or creed. This is an important point, and one that I will return to throughout the dissertation with respect to residential patterns in San Diego and the mobility constraints faced by laborers and other area residents. Lefebvre’s vision is quite complex when applied to the contemporary city — equality of access in a major metropolitan area today requires equality of mobility — as city centers or other privileged spaces can be rendered inaccessible not only through architecture or legal means but also by physical distance from low-income neighborhoods or public transit lines. But as Mitchell (Mitchell 2003) and other prominent urban theorists point out, the ideal and language of rights are among the most powerful tools available to those who
champion equality in the face of power (Blomley 1994a; Blomley 1994b; Soja 2010; Young 1990).

The changes to urban structure and consumer lifestyles are tied both to the growth of day labor in the United States as well as the conflicts that often arise as a result of day labor activities. Don Mitchell has argued that locational conflicts are conflicts over rights to space, which are part of the wider struggle for the right to the city (2003). The day laboring population is largely comprised of individuals who are viewed as “threats” to quality of life and whose visible presence is considered disorderly: visibly poor, presumed-to-be-undocumented immigrants. As such, conflicts regarding day labor activities and presence can be understood as a reaction by those with a vested interest in maintaining the commodity value of a neighborhood or city’s “quality of life” within the right to the city framework. However, the financial impacts of day labor activities rarely become part of debates during community conflicts; instead, these geographically complex problems are almost always framed according to two competing and overlapping discourses (Esbenshade 2000; Toma and Esbenshade 2001). The first is that of the behavioral problems associated with day labor sites; public safety issues related to stopping or disrupting traffic, public urination, and general intimidation of other residents. In this discourse, day labor problems are quite similar to those we see in conflicts arising around public space use by the homeless (Amster 2003), prostitutes (Sibley 1999), street vendors (Novo 2003; Swanson 2007, 2010; Wardrop 2006), young people (Crotty, Moreno, and Aitken 2008; Hyde 2000; Venkatesh, Kassimir, and Social
Science Research Council (U.S.). Collaborative Research Network on Youth and Globalization. 2007) and a host of other low-income populations (Matthews and Pitts 2001; Mitchell 2003; Staeheli and Mitchell 2008). The corresponding difficulty of determining the basis for the conflict is nearly identical as well. The second discourse common to day labor conflicts is that of the laborers presumed lack of legal citizenship status in the United States. A large percentage of day laborers are undocumented immigrants, and when day labor conflict is framed as an issue of citizenship, they are little more than a public face, or a stand-in for a wider conflict related to immigration in the United States which has devolved to the local scale in the neoliberal era (Varsanyi 2008a, 2008b). It would also be fair to say that when day labor conflicts are framed in this manner, they are no longer neighborhood-based (NIMBY) conflicts but are connected across scales to the larger pro and anti-immigrant political interest communities (who consider the entire nation their “backyard”). The community dynamics that lead to conflict around day labor spaces will be discussed chapters four, five, and six, but regardless of the underlying basis for community antagonism toward day labor activities, the tension created is part of the process by which society, or a community, defines what behaviors are acceptable or appropriate in particular places, at particular times. These constantly evolving socio-spatial processes are how society, and the communities from which it is comprised, define and police the boundaries of social membership, as well as the rights and privileges that membership entails.
1.4.4 The Role of Race and Class in Community Conflicts

The shift in the geography of day labor, from the inner-city to suburban neighborhoods, moved a minority presence into the previously hyper-white landscape of suburban America. It is perhaps unsurprising then to find that existing research on day labor conflict almost universally concludes that anti-day labor sentiment in areas near to hiring sites is the result of racism by white, mostly suburban homeowners (Crotty 2007; Esbenshade 2000). I argue that this conclusion is too simplistic because it neglects to account for the diverse ways that difference is constructed, how the boundaries of community are designated, or the role of space and place in the development of collective identity.

The dividing lines of community are many and complex. Also community dynamics vary geographically, so an action or element that generates conflict in one neighborhood may not have the same effect in another place. However, as they are part of the social fabric, race and class play a role in most locational conflicts. Consider for instance the site selection for a hazardous waste disposal facility. The entire debate regarding suitability of the site would likely be based on environmental data, parts per million of arsenic that would leech into groundwater supplies or other such measures. It is unlikely that race would be part of the environmental impact report. Yet, Pulido (1996, 2006) has demonstrated that the eventual locations selected place a wildly disproportionate environmental burden on people of color, even after correcting for income. In cases like these, the lines of injustice are drawn clearly along the racial divides in American cities.
Environmental racism, however, does not speak directly to how racial and class based community conflict develop in the first place. When one considers how conflicts develop, in some ways it is less important to talk about race and class specifically and more important to think about the various lines along which difference is constructed. In contemporary “Western” societies it is rare to find a conflict that is explicitly defined by all community members as being about race or class. Instead difference is drawn along other more politically and socially acceptable lines, which often correspond quite closely with racial and/or class based divisions. Two examples of this are conflicts that are ostensibly about behavioral problems of particular groups of people, and conflicts based on legal citizenship in the United States. Hubbard describes a NIMBY conflict in which anti-prostitution groups justified their actions “with reference to the well-being of sex workers as well as their own quality of life” (2006, 93). In this case an essentially class-based conflict over the presence of prostitution is couched as an effort to protect the helpless sex workers from their own poor decisions. It is simply convenient that helping the prostitutes will also “purify” their neighborhood (Sibley 1999). We find similar issues arising around homeless individuals’ right to the city, as Mitchell (2003) so evocatively highlights. What is most interesting about these sorts of class-based community conflicts is how racialized they are. The racial homogeneity of certain urban spaces in the United States is so thorough that it becomes impossible to effectively distinguish between the “rational” (read behavioral complaints) and “irrational” (read race or other bias-based) conflicts that arise within communities.
It should be clear at this point that it is extremely difficult to differentiate between the effects of race and class in understanding and explaining locational conflicts. And perhaps it is unnecessary to do so. Consider the following passage from Crotty and Bosco (2008):

According to Pulido (2006), the United States as a nation has been defined explicitly in racial terms. Race and class are so closely tied to one another in the United States that much of the way that Americans identify a place as safe, dangerous, friendly or hostile is based on personal associations with elements of the landscape that indicate the racial composition of the area. It is through this racialized understanding of landscapes that day laborers are often found to be “out of place” (Cresswell 1996), and therefore problematic. In other words, the emergence of an informal day labor hiring site draws more negative attention in affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods than in neighborhoods with a larger minority presence (Crotty 2007).

This argument is particularly attractive because it agrees with some of the earliest work on race and day labor conflicts (Esbenshade 2000) and also because it is simple and does not try to distinguish between race and class, white and rich. However there are a number of elements of urban geography and more recent mappings of day labor in San Diego that challenge an explanation based entirely on race. The existence of non-white ethnoburbs for example (Li 1998b, 1998a), challenges the notion that the suburban landscape is an exclusively “white” racialized landscape (Meinig 1979a, 1979b). The rise of day labor conflicts around hiring sites in these non-white suburban spaces challenges the idea that day labor
conflict is a simple matter of racism, as many pro-immigrant political groups argue, and would strengthen the argument that day labor conflict was inherently class-based. However, if we were to find that conflict was lower in these non-white suburban areas, then it would lend credence to the argument that day labor conflict was inherently race-based and not class-based.

Geographic perspectives regarding the role of race and place in identity politics complicate this argument further. Geographers have contributed to theorizations of race as a social construction, and perhaps even more importantly, have demonstrated how place shapes the construction of race (Jackson, Penrose, and Association of American Geographers. Meeting 1994). Race is but one part of identity which is shaped in a large degree by the context in which a person is racialized. In short, it is not the same to be white in Birmingham, Alabama, and San Diego, California. Processes of racialization operate independent of normative definitions of scale, so it is not the same to be black in two different countries, states, cities, neighborhoods, streets, houses, or bodies. Place matters. The growth of relational perspectives in geography pushes these theorizations even further (Delaney 2002; Massey 2004b; Massey 2005; Murdoch 2006; Nash 2003; Nayak 2006). Understanding the give and take relationship between place and identity provides extremely fertile ground for theorizing community conflicts, be they based on race, class, gender, or any other dividing line along which social difference is typically defined. Yet the increased complexity of relational theorizations of race, space, and place can limit their applicability for quantitative analysis of material deprivation, exploitation, and
victimization that exists as a result of the divisions within society. Therefore, in this dissertation, I draw on a range of geographic theory to provide the greatest analytical depth possible to understand the ideological and material challenges posed by day labor.

1.4.5 Geographic Perspectives of Day Labor Spaces

At the most basic level, a hiring site is a place. It is a place where men wait for work. It is a place where laborers socialize, share stories, and develop social and economic networks. It is also a place that some area residents may choose to avoid. The day labor site has a complicated and relational identity. In human geography, place has been thought as a location on the earth’s surface (Anselin 1995), in terms of the subjectivity of its experience (e.g., sense of place, or a meaningful location) (Cresswell 2004; Tuan 1977), as the scale of interaction for the power relations of everyday life (e.g., conflict and/or cooperation) (Allen 2003), and, more recently, as a relational yet elusive event with important political implications for thinking about social relations across space (Massey 2005). These conceptualizations are critical for this research because, as a place, day labor hiring site can be understood in a number of ways.

Understanding place from multiple perspectives allows for a more complete analysis of the subject at hand. The four perspectives on place outlined above each represent a mode of thinking that is characteristic of a particular era in the discipline of human geography and/or a particular philosophical perspective. In fact, the
perspectives on place each emerge in some sense as a response to the criticisms leveled against earlier theorizations of place, and thus can be understood as part of a continuum of thought on the concept of place. This in no way means that there is not value in early theorizations of place or that more recent perspectives are somehow “more accurate.” Each perspective was developed by groups within the discipline wishing to emphasize different ways in which geography could provide insights into the way various processes, social, economic, natural or otherwise, worked. As such it is dangerous to ignore other theorizations of place (or space or landscape for that matter) because each theorization corresponds with particular research methodologies which can be used to help create a more full understanding of the phenomena which geographers study. This is certainly the case for day labor studies, and in this dissertation I draw on each of the four conceptualizations of place to provide a more full understanding of day labor sites – as places themselves, and as part of a wider-interconnection of spatially mediated relations across space (Massey 2005).

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS

The findings presented in this dissertation are drawn from data collected between 2006 and 2011 using mixed methods. So called “mixed” methods research refers to any project that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and/or analysis. Researchers who employ a mixed methodology reject the dichotomy of positivism and constructivism and the methodological restrictions that
adherence to one a singular perspective entail, while not necessarily rejecting the theoretical critiques of both perspectives. Instead mixed-methods research is oriented “toward solving practical problems in the ‘real world’” (Feilzer 2010, 8) By using mixed research methods, a project also avoids the potential pitfalls and critiques common to research that takes a singular perspective on an issue. For example, criticisms of ungeneralizable results typical to extremely small-scale ethnographic projects can hardly be levied against a study that examines the issue using spatial statistics at the regional scale. Furthermore, common criticisms of quantitative research – that Euclidian representations of space and statistical presentations fail to acknowledge the diversity of lived experience and socio-spatial production – do not apply to a study that contextualizes its quantitative findings within a regional ethnographic framework, and supplements those findings with analysis at the microgeographic scale.

The dissertation was designed and executed using a pragmatic approach. Pragmatism is an approach that focuses on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research. It seeks to balance utility of results with critical reflexivity during the research process (Feilzer 2010). In a study that uses pragmatism as its organizational framework, the research methods are chosen because of what the researcher thinks they will help to explain about the subject/problem under investigation. As such, the researcher does not “care” about the methods used, just the data that will be produced. This does not excuse sloppy research, and pragmatic should never be confused with expedient. Pragmatic, mixed-
methods research requires good understanding of the quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses undertaken, with clear explanation of why each method of data collection and analysis was appropriate in examining a particular topic. The research methods should be transparent and replicable (as much as possible) (Denscombe 2008, 274). Indeed, Feilzer (2010) argues that the pragmatic approach improves the quality of the project overall by facilitating “abductive reasoning” – by accessing a wider range of the realm of knowledge on a particular subject. In this dissertation for example, quantitative mapping and spatial analyses led to observations about the importance of public transit for day labor site locations. These observations were later verified during participant observation and informal interviews at particular hiring sites. The diversity of types of data produced through mixed methods research is important in the context of pragmatism as well. By generating multiple types of data, the researcher builds the capacity to make the results of the project relevant to a wider range of the general population – a key aspect when the goal is to influence policy in a democratic system.

The three primary research methods used during the fieldwork component of the study were mapping, participant observation, and informal interviewing. Identifying all of the hiring sites in San Diego County was one of the first tasks for this dissertation. The mapping process began in 2007 and continued through 2011. Though the methodology for identifying hiring sites was developed somewhat organically, other social science researchers also follow a similar mapping approach (MacCannell 2005; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). I used the locational information
provided to me by laborers and other stakeholders to identify sites. At each site, I recorded basic demographic data (total number of laborers at the site, racial distribution at each site) as well as site and situational characteristics. At most sites, I stopped and spoke briefly with the laborers, asking those laborers about other hiring sites that they knew of or used. I used these informal conversations to locate all of the informal, disconnected sites in the region. I also visited multiple locations of particular stores that are commonly connected to day labor hiring sites (e.g. Home Depot, Frazee Paint, U-Haul). I was able to identify a few additional hiring sites in this manner, but not surprisingly this part of the search was much less efficient than following leads generated from informal interviews with jornaleros. Once a site was identified, it was visited at least four times per year at three-month intervals, at which time the number of laborers and their demographic characteristics (race, gender, and when possible age) were recorded. The locational and demographic data was entered into a database. The locational data were used to generate maps of day labor sites in the ArcGIS 10.0 platform while the demographic and site population data were used for analyzing trends in site usage over the course of the dissertation research.

Six of the forty-five total sites were analyzed further because they exhibited particular situational and relational characteristics that were identified as common to many of the sites in the SDMA through visual surveys and landscape analysis. Participant observation was conducted at each of the selected sites for two to four weeks. Participant observation is an effective research tool for developing a
“contextual understanding” of social groups or places. A contextual understanding is simply an in-depth interpretation of a particular time and place through direct experience (Kearns 2000). Contextual understanding of particular types of hiring sites proved extremely useful in developing the new typology of day labor sites that I present in Chapter Three. While conducting participant observation at the hiring sites, I also conducted informal interviews and short, on-the-spot surveys with area stakeholders. Informal interviews varied in length, from a few passing words to conversations that took place over several hours at a hiring site. On average, about half of the laborers who regularly visited a hiring site were interviewed over the two-to-four week participant observation period. Shorthand notes were collected during participant observation and informal interviews. At the end of each day the notes were used to guide the production of audio field notes, which were later transcribed and coded using N-Vivo qualitative data analysis software. The data collection methods used in this study were chosen to create a comfortable research environment and maintain as much detail from observation and informal interviews as possible. Informal interviewing and data collection are common and effective research methods when working with groups that are uncomfortable with the formal interview process (Herbert 1997).

Effective and ethical participant observation requires a high degree of critical reflexivity throughout the fieldwork. Critical reflexivity demands that the researchers remain self-conscious and aware of their own situation, studying the effect of their position on the research process and data generated (Dowling 2005). This is
especially important for fieldwork with jornaleros, because the presence of a researcher, especially one that is visually distinct from the majority of the day laboring population due to race, dress, or behavior (e.g. conspicuously holding a clipboard and talking to laborers), could draw unwanted attention to the site or cause an employer to hire help from a different site. Throughout the fieldwork I endeavored to have as little impact on the normal activities at each hiring site, and adjusted my approach to participant observation to ensure that my presence did not cost the laborers any employment opportunities.

One significant concern during the fieldwork was the affect that my visible presence as a white male would have at sites that were used exclusively by Hispanic laborers. Would the presence of a white male seem out of place and drive potential employers away from the hiring site? This concern did lead to a decision to shorten the length of time each day that I spent at two hiring sites. My identity as a white male in my late twenties (and toward the end of the fieldwork, my very early thirties) also affected the way that laborers treated me, as well as the ways that I engaged with the day labor spaces. The effect I had on the behavior of jornaleros was distinctly different before and after I identified myself as a researcher rather than a new day laborer competing for work. When I arrived at each site, I would engage with laborers individually and explain why I was at the hiring site. This means of introducing myself meant that early on in my observations at each site, most of the laborers viewed me as a potential competitor for employment. Over time, however, I interacted with enough jornaleros that word spread around the site that I was not
competing for jobs. The tone of all my interactions with the men became more congenial once the laborers stopped viewing me as a potential competitor.

Once the men found out I was a researcher there were a few different reactions, ranging from indifference to curiosity. In the entire five years I have conducted fieldwork at day labor sites, only one laborer had an overtly negative reaction to my presence. Most were interested in sharing parts of their stories with me, especially their experiences as day laborers: their best jobs, their worst jobs, incidences of abuse or unexpected kindness came freely. On the whole, jornaleros were much less forthcoming when I pursued lines of questioning that dealt with personal issues: their relationships with their families, loneliness, fear, and the like. I was able to develop particularly strong rapport with twelve laborers who were willing to discuss their life experiences in greater depth. Their contributions to this dissertation are considerable and their pseudonyms will appear repeatedly in the chapters to come.

1.6 Dissertation Roadmap

Each of the chapters that follow highlights specific aspects of the geography of day labor and community conflict in San Diego. As such, the research methodology used to produce data for the analysis presented is unique for each chapter. The specific research methods used and sources of data for each chapter are explained in detail in the respective chapters. Chapter two examines the spatial distribution of day labor sites in the region and uses spatial statistics to demonstrate the importance of local employment characteristics for day labor hiring site locations. The chapter also
examines a number of characteristics related to day laborers’ mobility – their ability to reach a hiring site from their place of residence. These locational characteristics are then used to develop a geographically-sensitive typology for day labor hiring sites. The utility of this new typology is demonstrated in chapter three, which uses the improved typology of day labor sites as a framework for understanding the multiple effects of the economic downturn on day labor markets throughout the region. Chapter four provides a detailed overview of the day-labor management strategies employed by city governments and community groups in the region over the past decade. Each strategy is examined in terms of its effectiveness relative to the resources dedicated to the effort. These direct interventions into the day labor market are positioned in relation to neoliberal ideology, and highlight the ways that day-labor spaces challenge and subvert the ideological pillars of neoliberalism. This discussion is followed by a case study in Chapter five that demonstrates the process by which a municipality decides to intervene in local day-labor activities directly. The case study also examines the potentially problematic nature of community-based resistance to neoliberal project by examining the narratives surrounding day labor that were mobilized in an effort to prevent the construction of a big-box home improvement store. Chapter six examines the production of day labor spaces in detail. Drawing on microgeographic analysis of the forty-five day labor sites identified in the region for this research, I show how jornaleros collectively employ a locational strategy of “selective or strategic visibility.” This strategy balances laborers’ need to be visible and accessible to potential employers with their desire to
avoid unnecessary exposure to members of the bystander public who are unlikely to hire them. The chapter explores the production of day labor spaces further by analyzing the socio-spatial relationships that laborers establish with nearby stakeholders and other laborers as well. I conclude the dissertation by articulating a vision for day labor organization that could potentially meet many of the daily needs of laborers, reduce community conflicts, and allow local governments to use their limited resources in ways that benefit a wider swath of their constituency. This vision is unquestionably utopian, but as a utopian project, it provides an ideal toward which jornaleros, stakeholders, and local governments can endeavor.
Chapter 2

A Multi-scalar Spatial Analysis of Day Labor Hiring Sites
in the San Diego Metropolitan Area

2.1 Introduction

Early research examining day labor activities is seriously lacking in attention to the geographic and historical aspects that contribute to the establishment of day labor sites in particular places and to the social processes that produce day labor spaces and sustain the location of hiring sites over time. The failure to attend to geographic aspects of day labor markets is the result of a powerful focus on identifying, publicizing, and working to eliminate rights abuses that are common in day labor. Most day labor research uses a typology of day labor sites established by Valenzuela and Melendez, which classifies informal sites as “connected” or “disconnected” and formally designated spaces for day labor activities, often sponsored by cities or community groups, as “regulated” sites (2003). Connected sites are those that are located adjacent to retail outlets that typically serve the industries in which laborers are employed, home improvement and paint stores, for example. The disconnected site type encompasses all informal sites that are not located adjacent to an industry-related store (Valenzuela and Melendez 2003, 4). This typology was important in early day labor research, as it identified some of the key stakeholders in day labor activity and conflict resolution: government, community groups, as well as retail outlets that often held a significant stake in day labor activities. Nearly ten years
later, the typology has not been updated, and is conspicuously lacking in attention to
the spatial dimensions of day labor activities. It is critical to move past the era of a-
spatial day labor studies, in which the locational selection process for a hiring site is
described as being “mysterious” but implicitly unworthy of further investigation
(Theodore 2007, 257). This need to better understand spatial characteristics of sites
is particularly relevant for policy-oriented day labor studies because there are a
myriad of socio-spatial contextual issues that can render interventions into day labor
markets ineffective.

Thinking relationally about place, space, and society provides a productive path
for engaging with day labor sites in a geographically sensitive manner. At the most
basic level, a hiring site is a place. It is a place where men wait for work. It is a place
where laborers socialize, share stories, and develop social and economic networks. It
is a place that some area residents may choose to avoid. The day labor site has a
complicated relational identity. This is true regardless of the site’s relationship to
nearby businesses or its connection to local government or community groups. From
a geographical relational perspective, place is understood as a moment in space-time,
or a spatio-temporal event (Massey 2005, 130). This perspective views all social and
natural actions as “trajectories,” the intersections of which constitute place.
However, there is no assumption of rigidity in these trajectories, only different
speeds of movement, which can give the impression of fixedness. When place is
considered as an intersection of trajectories, it is a place from which to view the
“power-geometry” in space – the geography of power. In this way, relational
perspectives of place connect to and extend from the view of place as “the scale of interaction for the power relations of everyday life” (Allen 2003, 11). Applying relational perspectives to empirical findings is challenging. The contention that space is in a constant state of creation makes it impossible to represent the processes of socio-spatial production in their full complexity (Bosco 2001, 2006). Attempts to map the fluidity of relational spaces are sometimes criticized as being insufficient; they are viewed as only illustrating a “slice of time” which is already past (Massey 2005). This sort of critique, while theoretically valid, can be detrimental to policy-oriented projects. Fluidity is not the same as volatility in the production of places, and volatility represents a more significant challenge for policy-makers than fluidity. Planning and policy efforts can be organized quite productively based on observed trends in the relational constitution of place: the directionality of the trajectories that intersect and, thereby, produce places. More simply, relational theory’s call to acknowledge the processes that produce places should not prevent us from using observed patterns and relationships to improve our understanding of those places or to guide policy interventions to alleviate the unjust outcomes that existing processes have and continue to produce.

In this chapter, I begin this process by examining the spatial characteristics of day labor sites and the neighborhoods where they are located. The chapter is comprised of three general sections. I begin by reviewing approaches to locational analysis in geography and link that literature to day-labor research. Though day labor studies rarely examine the spatial dimensions of day labor activity, it is possible to
ascertain some information regarding jornaleros’ spatial strategies and the locational characteristics of hiring sites. This literature review provides a foundation for a multi-scalar quantitative analysis of the San Diego Metropolitan Area day labor market. In the first analysis, I compare the demographic and employment characteristics of “day-labor neighborhoods”\(^1\) with regional means to highlight the linkages between day labor activity and local employment opportunity. This comparison shows that the census-tracts located near day-labor sites, which I call “day-labor neighborhoods”, have higher levels of employment in construction and agriculture than the regional average. While the regional analysis identifies the differences between neighborhoods where day-labor activity is sustained over time and those where it is not, this regional comparison does not sufficiently illustrate the multiple factors that intersect to produce different types of day labor spaces in the SDMA. To better illuminate relational production of day labor spaces, I conducted a principal component analysis, which identified five factors that collectively explain nearly 75 percent of the variance between SDMA hiring sites. In the final section of the chapter, the results of both quantitative analyses are combined with thick descriptions of site and laborer characteristics to establish a geo-spatial typology of day-labor hiring sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area.

### 2.2 Locational Analysis

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\(^1\) Day Labor Neighborhoods are defined as the 2000 census tracts located within \(\frac{1}{2}\) mile of a hiring site.
Understanding the locations of phenomena and the processes that affect their distribution in space is one of the foundational aspects of geographic research. Geographers have examined the distribution of a great many subjects, from medical clinics offering prenatal care (McLafferty and Grady 2004) to cemeteries (Price 1996), and from aquifers (Hudak and Loaiciga 1992) to atmospheric gases (Petit 1999). Geographers study the spatial dimensions of phenomena that affect people from before they are born to after their death, and range from miles below the earth’s surface to the upper reaches of our planet’s atmosphere. Moreover, the strength of the geographic perspective is not simply to understand simple distributions of things in space but to more fully understand specific subjects or issues by contextualizing the effects of multiple processes that collectively produce the distribution of the thing in question (Allen 2003).

Dating back to Alfred Weber’s Theory of the Location of Industries, originally published in 1908 (Weber 1971), the spatial dimensions and analysis of economic activity have been major areas of interest for geographers. Weber argued that the locations where firms chose to locate could be understood as the spatial equilibrium achieved between agglomeration economies and diseconomies. Economies of agglomeration are the advantages firms gain by locating near one another: reduced cost of production due to lower transportation costs, access to skilled labor force, and higher levels of innovation. Diseconomies of agglomeration are the disadvantages that firms face as a result of clustering, including increased land rent and lower prices due to competition for customers (Glaeser 2010). Weber’s work was highly
influential in geography and economics, both of which applied his conceptualization to neoclassical economic theory and traditional location theory, though in different ways. The locational analysis models that were developed from this line of research depend to a large degree on common assumptions within the neoclassical perspective: that all individuals make rational decisions and that all activity takes place on an isotropic plane. In addition, at least in the earlier and most simple formulations of these models, there is also the assumption that markets are perfectly competitive and that rents reflect the interaction of supply and demand for land. In other words, there are no monopoly and/or uneven power relations in the land market (including racial segregation, state power, political machines, etc.). These assumptions limited the applicability of early models, and most of the theoretical and empirical work since the 1960’s has sought to address their failures by either refining or challenging neoclassical analysis techniques (Coe, Kelly, and Yeung 2007).

Behavioral geography, Marxist critiques, and what is often called new economic geography all emerged as attempts to flesh out the ways that economic activity is organized spatially in practice. Each of these theoretical approaches addresses particular gaps in understanding that result from over-reliance on a singular theoretical lens for analyzing economic activity. In the late 1960’s, behavioral geographers began questioning the assumption that all economic actors behave rationally. In location theory studies, economic geographers using a behavioral approach conducted exhaustive surveys to quantify the factors that actors weighed when making locational decisions, rather than assuming that actors behaved
rationally (Scott 2000). Marxist perspectives focused on the production of social and spatial inequalities within the capitalist system. Therefore, within the Marxist perspective, the spatial organization of the economy is not simply the result of efficiency-driven decisions; rather, locational outcomes are the result of social structures that frame the struggle between capital and labor and the fact that capitalist production must take place somewhere (Harvey 1973, 1982). New economic geography includes a collection of perspectives that are generally critical of neoclassical and Marxist theories alike. New economic geographers do not separate economic processes from the social, cultural, and political context in their analysis. They argue instead that those factors are crucial for understanding the spatial dynamics of the economy (Coe, Kelly, and Yeung 2007, 12-13).

Today, a range of geographic perspectives inform site selection research. Drawing on multiple perspectives allows researchers to examine a remarkable diversity of issues affecting service and information sectors of the economy. Stephen L. J. Smith, for example, examined differences in dine-out rates between Canadian provinces, as well as local patterns of site selection to better understand the distribution and success rate of restaurants that catered primarily to tourists (1983). Sorenson and Stuart (Sorenson and Stuart 2001; Stuart and Sorenson 2003) examined the role of inter-firm social and professional networks in directing and influencing the spatial distribution of the bio-technology firms in which venture capital firms choose to invest. Empirical studies highlighting the differences in locational strategies employed by firms across different industries demonstrate the
importance of theoretical and methodological flexibility in locational analysis within
the contemporary global economy.

While research has paid attention to the locational strategies of different types of
firms, there is still a dearth of research on locational strategies of firms and other
economic actors operating in the informal sector. One notable exception is the work
of Maureen Hays-Mitchell who examined the spatio-temporal behavior of informal
street vendors, also known as *Ambulantes*, in six cities of intermediate size in Peru.
She found that street vendors employed very specific locational strategies, targeting
central business districts, areas along transportation routes, on heavily trafficked side
streets leading to formal-sector markets, and around central squares common in
that informal vendors employ are responses to agglomerative effects that they get
from clustering as well as deglomerative effects that lead some ambulantes to proffer
their wares in spaces with less competition. Hays-Mitchell also noted that
ambulantes often developed relationships with particular area shopkeepers that
worked to the advantage of both formal and informal vendors. This type of
negotiation produces particular types of spaces for informal activity – a subject that
will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

Hays-Mitchell’s work demonstrates two ideas that are crucial in the geographic
analysis of day labor sites: free from the direct constraints posed by zoning, rent, or
other formal means of regulating activities in particular urban spaces, informal
vendors target the locations where they are likely to sell the most merchandise.
However, even without formal locational constraints, the areas accessible to informal vendors are informally restricted in a number of ways. No vendor makes a locational decision in a vacuum. They all must interpret and negotiate the place-based context within which they live and work. In the case of the Peruvian ambulantes that means the urban centers of Chiclayo, Cajamarca, Huaraz, Huancayo, Ica, and Cusco; each city with its own urban structure and social dynamics that affect how and where street vendors conduct their business. In the case of jornaleros in San Diego, the local context is that of the North American city – in which each laborer may need to overcome structural elements of urban design in order to maximize his chances for employment. The characteristics of hiring sites, and the variations between sites, are the result of historical and contemporary processes at various scales. The historical geography of day labor at the national level and the historical patterns of urban development in U.S. cities are particularly important for analyzing the locational characteristics of day labor sites in San Diego County.

2.2.1 Mobility and Job Search Processes

Imagine for a moment that you begin a new career tomorrow, as a day laborer. Where would you wait for work? What information would help you make that decision? Once the decision has been made and you know where you are going to wait for work, how will you get there? Walk? Bike? Ride the bus? If you have access to a car, you might choose to drive to your chosen location. In reality, laborers do not make these decisions in such a hierarchical manner; however, the answers to these
questions give a foundational shape to the spatial distribution of day labor hiring sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area. Each jornalero’s daily decision regarding where they will wait for work is the result of a complex interaction of factors; two of these factors are particularly important for this analysis: what a laborer believes his chances of finding work in a particular space, and the resources (time, money, physical energy) it requires to reach each potential day labor space. The constraints on each laborer’s mobility vary by housing status and place of residence, access to a bicycle or automobile, and even racial identity or immigration status in the United States. Like other minority and lower-skilled workers facing a spatial mismatch between places of residence and places of work, day laborers experience precarious labor conditions and incur high costs in attempting to bridge this gap (Joassart-Marcelli and Alberto 2006). Laborers may look for work in areas that are near their residences and rely on employers who also live in the area to provide transportation to job sites. Other jornaleros may opt to commute considerable distances via public transit or personal vehicle, if they can afford one (Valenzuela et al. 2006). Some even chose to reside temporarily or permanently in vehicles, canyons or open spaces close to hiring sites. The various strategies jornaleros use to overcome structural mobility constraints are a key element in understanding the factors that produce different types of day labor spaces.

Jornaleros are not unique in their use of complex strategies to access employment opportunities. Indeed, poor people of a variety of backgrounds manage to overcome mobility constraints in their search for employment – though often at
significant cost. For example, domestic workers in San Diego, the majority of whom are female and likely to be undocumented immigrants, identify employment opportunities through social networking and access their job sites using similar strategies as day laborers (long commutes on public transit, carpooling, or employers may provide transportation) (Mattingly 1999). Melissa Gilbert’s research compared the mobility constraints faced by white and minority working-poor women with children in Worcester, Massachusetts and found that thanks to social and support networks, minority women with children were in many ways better off than their white counterparts, despite the fact that the white women had considerably greater mobility (Gilbert 1998). By critiquing the common assumption that greater mobility equals greater power, Gilbert’s work underscores the potential value of social networks for addressing societal inequalities and upending hegemonic power structures. Furthermore, by highlighting the differences in mobility and use of social networks to access employment opportunity among women of different ethnic groups, Gilbert demonstrates how particular labor market characteristics are produced relationally. In this case, producing labor markets in Worcester, MA that are highly segregated by both race and gender.

2.2.2 Getting to the Corner: Mobility and Jornaleros’ Locational Strategies

Regardless of the manner in which jornaleros overcome their individual or group mobility constraints, we must assume that all laborers wish to find employment and would therefore try to access spaces where they believe their chances of employment are greatest. The question then that must be answered is: “What characteristics do
laborers look for when selecting a location to establish a hiring site?” How do laborers determine where the “best” spaces for finding employment are located? Abel Valenzuela argues that day laborers should be understood as individual level entrepreneurs who trade in a single commodity – labor (2001). From this perspective, laborers are retailers like any other and make rational decisions to maximize their profits at various time scales. This perspective provides a useful analytical lens for examination of day laborers’ locational strategies. If each jornalero is viewed as an entrepreneurial retailer, then his spatial strategy should position him in a location where he is most accessible to the greatest number of potential customers. In this case, the “customers” are people who want to hire temporary labor.

Retail geographers merge traditional locational analysis and accessibility research in ways that are quite applicable to day labor site analysis. Brick and mortar retail establishments use a similar locational strategy when selecting a site for their business. When businesses choose locations for their stores, they should know where their potential customers are located and how far those customers are willing to travel to purchase the good that the business provides. Businesses should seek out locations that maximize the number of potential customers that can be reasonably expected to visit the stores. This type of locational information is so valuable that there are multiple companies that specialize in the spatial dimensions of marketplace analysis; ESRI and Tetrad (formerly Claritas) are two of the largest. The case for day laborers is different than a traditional, brick and mortar, retail outlet in important
ways, however. Formal-sector retail establishments can access quantifiable data about the demographic and economic character of potential locations. In all of my conversations with laborers in the SDMA, I found no evidence that they were accessing spatial employment data and using it to evaluate potential sites. Instead, they depended on informal information networks for employment information. Traditional retail outlets analyze the transit patterns and mobility constraints of their customers to make sure the store is accessible. Day laborers, by contrast, must balance their desire to be accessible to potential employers with their own mobility constraints. It should not be surprising then that informal interviews with laborers revealed that the accessibility of particular sites from laborers’ place of residence was a major factor in their initial site selection process (Fieldnotes 2006-2011).

### 2.2.3 Historical Spatialities of Day Labor

Despite the recent “discovery” of day labor as part of the United States’ landscape by anti-immigrant groups and media outlets, there is nothing new about day labor in the United States (or globally for that matter). Abel Valenzuela (2003b) offers a brief history of day labor in the United States in which he traces day labor work back to at least 1780 (Mohl 1971). Dockworkers, the broadly defined construction-service industry, and agriculture traditionally have been the primary economic sectors connected to this type of labor hiring (Larrowe 1955; Valenzuela Jr. 2003b). The role of temporary labor in agriculture is particularly relevant for day-labor research in California. Drawn by inexpensive housing options, migrant
workers moved to urban skid rows during periods of low labor demand in the agricultural industry. Urban growth also expanded the demand for labor in construction and other industries which many migrant laborers found more attractive than agricultural labor (Valenzuela Jr. 2003b). Skid row day laborers were also hired as strike breakers by anti-union farm owners during agricultural labor union strikes of the early 20th century (Mitchell 1996).

New immigrants and other disenfranchised people have used corners and other quasi-public spaces to wait for work in a host of industries for hundreds of years – and they have often drawn the ire of wealthier and longer-established residents. So what makes contemporary day labor a new and unique type of social conflict in the US cities? The most significant change for day labor employment under economic restructuring in the United States has been the development and massive growth of the suburban landscape, within which there is great demand for day labor in construction and landscaping industries, but a somewhat limited tolerance for their physical presence. The growth of suburbia affected the geography of day-labor in two important ways. First, day laborers who might have sought work historically in skid rows or in close proximity to historical immigrant ghettos expanded their employment search areas to include areas farther from traditional low-income or immigrant housing, like suburbia. Secondly, suburban sprawl overtook many areas from which agricultural day labor was hired. In these cases, which are particularly relevant in San Diego, the type of day labor work changed, but the physical locations of the hiring sites did not (Fieldnotes 2006-2011).
Day labor research has been largely a-spatial from its inception and the trend continues in the majority of contemporary work on the subject. As was discussed in the introduction, research by Valenzuela and Melendez established a typology of hiring sites with three primary categories: “connected”, “disconnected”, or “regulated” (2003). Connected sites are those that are located adjacent to retail outlets that typically serve the industries in which laborers are employed. Home improvement and paint stores, as well as moving supply stores are the classic examples. Regulated sites are “formal hiring sites either controlled by a city or county (e.g. Westchester) or managed by a community-based organization” (Valenzuela and Melendez 2003, 4). The “disconnected” label was applied to any site that was not connected to a retail outlet or formally regulated by local government or community organizations. Disconnected sites were described as not having a connection to a specific industry, but their existence could be attributed to a variety of other factors including “foot or vehicular traffic, police cooperation, or historical reasons (i.e. site that has existed for a many years)” (Valenzuela and Menendez 2003, 4). The description of connected, disconnected, and regulated sites (later sub-divided into formal sites and workers centers) established the first typology of day labor hiring sites. Though the typology is lacking in geographic detail, it is noteworthy because it acknowledges jornaleros’ agency in site selection process. Accounts of early day labor sites in skid row areas or immigrant ghettos implicitly argue that laborers lacked agency in the hiring process, as they simply waited by their homes for employers to arrive and hire them. They did not take
action to overcome their mobility constraints and improve their chances of finding work. By differentiating between types of sites, Valenzuela and Melendez establish criteria by which laborers could evaluate sites and select the one that best meets their needs. Their approach acknowledges choice in the site selection process. Connected sites are located such that they are convenient to likely employers. These sites create a “one-stop-shop” where employers can purchase supplies for particular projects, and hire additional labor they might require. In contrast, laborers who choose to look for work through regulated sites might choose to do so because they appreciate the more structured hiring process, or other amenities that the site offers compared to an informal site. Laborers’ agency is also acknowledged in disconnected sites, though in a rather vague manner, since a wide variety of factors are identified as potential bases for a site’s existence.

More recently, a national survey of day laborers published by Valenzuela Jr. et al. (2006) identified several common situational characteristics of day labor spaces. Data from the National Day Labor Survey indicate that 53 percent of all informal sites in California are located “near industry-related businesses,” which does not include farms, but would include agricultural supply stores and nurseries. A further 7 percent of all hiring sites are located on a “busy street” and 21 percent of the total hiring sites are formal workers centers (formerly called regulated sites) (Gonzalez 2007, 8). Most of these data simply re-phrases the previous categorizations: “near industry-related businesses” is the definition of a “connected” site. Only the addition of the “busy street” situational characteristic provides new information, but on its
own, it is not especially useful for understanding how and why particular spaces on particular busy streets are selected as day labor hiring sites. Furthermore, considering that a day laborer must be visible and accessible to an employer to be hired, the fact that only 7 percent of hiring sites are found on busy streets indicates that there are additional factors influencing the locational selection process for day labor hiring sites. It should be noted that even at the national scale, it is unlikely that only 7 percent of hiring sites are located near or on busy streets. Rather, because categories are mutually exclusive, the existing typology privileges the spatial relationship between the site and a store over other characteristics related to transportation patterns, urban design, or social characteristics. So a “connected” site very well might be located on a busy street, but it would not be classified as such. The “busy street” variable is only applied when the previous categorizations cannot be applied. Because the existing site categorizations say nothing about the relationship of a site to any other aspects of the social landscape, they are limited in their applicability for understanding geographic variation between hiring sites in the same region. In particular, the “busy street” variable ignores the simple logistics of the day labor employment negotiation. When an employer arrives at a site, he must stop his vehicle, wait for laborers to approach the automobile, and then negotiate the wage, time and responsibilities of the job. These negotiations happen relatively quickly, between thirty seconds and two minutes on average, but the logistics still make it very difficult to accomplish safely on a busy street. As a consequence, it is more efficient and safe for hiring sites to be located a short distance away from a busy
street. In such a location, laborers are equally accessible to employers, but the employment negotiations can be conducted more safely, and without drawing unnecessary, potentially negative, attention to a hiring site. In the San Diego Metropolitan Area, for example, only 31 percent of hiring sites are located within 100 feet of a major road. However, nearly 90 percent (88.89%) are located within 500 feet of a major road. Laborers in the SDMA clearly employ a locational strategy that prioritizes accessibility and safety over visibility alone.

A geographic understanding of day labor requires identifying the characteristics that allow particular neighborhoods to sustain informal hiring sites over time. If a particular site does not provide sufficient employment for a jornalero to survive, he will be forced to relocate by necessity. Therefore, it is critical to examine the neighborhood characteristics that sustain day labor sites over time. Most research on day laborers to date focuses on issues of race and social marginalization of day laborers (Bartley and Roberts 2006; Camou 2002; Claffey 2006; Esbenshade 2000; Theodore 2007; Theodore and Martin 2007). It is perhaps unsurprising then that race and class are identified in this work as important elements in laborers’ locational strategies. This perspective prioritizes racial and class characteristics “because day laborers are not hired by other working-class Latinos, they generally wait for work in commercial districts or more well-to-do neighborhoods” (Esbenshade 2000, 4). In the United States, there is considerable correlation between race and income levels, so it is reasonable to think that laborers could use racial landscapes to interpret wealth. This perspective suggests that laborers employ a locational strategy that
targets whiter and wealthier neighborhoods because the jornaleros believe that their employment chances are better in those racially-defined neighborhoods. If this assertion is accurate and laborers target high income neighborhoods with few Hispanic residents in their search for employment, we would expect to find that the percentage of white residents in day labor neighborhoods is higher than non-day labor neighborhoods. Day labor neighborhoods should also show significantly higher median incomes than non-day labor neighborhoods.

However, because day laborers are hired in a limited number of industries – construction, agriculture, and general home improvement – employment opportunity may not correspond directly with mappings of race or class in a region (Valenzuela et al. 2006, 3). If employment opportunities do not match the racial or class characteristics of neighborhoods closely, then laborers would be forced to relocate in search of greater opportunity. As laborers relocate to improve their chances of employment, we would expect to find day labor sites in SDMA neighborhoods with higher than average employment in construction and agriculture, as these are the most common industries for which they are hired. Laborers might also target neighborhoods with high levels of owner-occupied housing, as individual homeowners account for roughly half of all day labor employment (Valenzuela et al. 2006). In the following section, I compare the demographic characteristics of day labor neighborhoods with regional means, to better elucidate the specific neighborhood characteristics required to sustain day labor sites over time.
2.3 Methodology
In the following sections, I examine the spatial organization of day labor hiring sites at two scales. In the first analysis, I conduct a two-sample t-test to compare the characteristics of “day-labor neighborhoods” with the rest of the San Diego Metropolitan Area. For this study, “day labor neighborhoods” are the census tracts with any portion falling within 1/2 mile of a day labor hiring site. Figure 2-1 shows the day labor neighborhoods and the associated hiring sites identified for this study. The reasoning behind this spatial definition is two-fold. First, census tracts are small enough to provide geographic specificity but large enough to incorporate residents and activity occurring around, but not immediately adjacent to, day labor sites in the analysis. These are the residential areas most likely to be directly impacted by the day labor activities, and therefore are critically important for understanding day-labor activity and the potential for conflict. Second, using census tract-level data allows for easy replication of this approach to study other areas throughout the United States.
Figure 2-1: Half-Mile Day Labor Neighborhoods in the San Diego Metropolitan Area

The second quantitative analysis moves to the sub-regional scale, and illustrates the diversity of factors related to the production and maintenance of day labor spaces. To better understand the complex processes that produce very different types of day labor spaces, I performed principal components analysis on a set of variables aggregated to the site level. Principal components analysis (PCF) is a popular type of factor analysis, most commonly used to distinguish patterns within a dataset. The key strength of this approach is that rather than stipulating thresholds a priori,
analysts can fit thresholds for multivariate categories using the available data. The key criteria for high quality PCF analysis is for the researcher to have a thorough understanding of the relevant variables so that the factor analysis is conducted on an appropriate dataset (Goddard and Kirby 1976). For this reason, the dataset used in the PCF analysis includes variables that proved to be important during the more than four years of ethnographic research at hiring sites throughout the region and were identified in the literature reviewed in the previous section as potentially important in determining the location of sites. The five factors identified from the analysis establish a quantitative foundation for the geo-spatial typology of day-labor sites, presented at the end of this chapter.

### 2.4 Regional Analysis

For the t-test analysis comparing day labor neighborhoods with regional averages, I created data profiles that include eleven variables (see Table 2-1). Socio-demographic data such as total population, total Hispanic population, total White population, percent of population Hispanic or non-Hispanic white, and median income were drawn from the 2000 US Census of Population and Housing (SF1). These particular variables allow for an examination of Jill Esbenshade (2000)’s argument that race and class were important drivers of day laborers’ site selection strategy. The population variable was included as a baseline for comparison, to test if laborers were locating in heavily populated areas, regardless of demographic or employment characteristics. A variety of employment-related variables were also
included in this analysis. If day laborers are targeting areas where their employment opportunities are greatest, it would be logical for hiring sites to be located in areas that are convenient to potential employers’ residences and places of work.

Residential employment variables, including the total number of census tract residents employed in construction (North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS Code: 23) or agriculture (NAICS Code: 11) were also drawn from the 2000 US Census of Population and Housing (SF3). Neighborhood employment variables, including the total construction (NAICS Code: 23) and agricultural (NAICS Code 11) jobs located in a census tract were drawn from the 2000 Census Transportation and Planning Package Part 2 (CTPP). For the purposes of the t-test comparison, a number of census tracts were removed from the regional mean calculation, including four tracts in eastern San Diego County with extremely low population density and all census tracts with military facilities, which present access restrictions preventing jornaleros from congregating in those tracts. A list of eligible census tracts is available by request.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>-1.6345</td>
<td>-1.4264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hispanic Population</td>
<td>-0.7407</td>
<td>-0.7936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total White Population</td>
<td>-1.708*</td>
<td>-1.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>-1.3954</td>
<td>-0.9708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Hispanic</td>
<td>0.6709</td>
<td>0.5106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White</td>
<td>-1.3092</td>
<td>-1.0793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Owner-Occupied Homes</td>
<td>1.8145*</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Ag – Place of Residence</td>
<td>-3.6116***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Construction – Place of Residence</td>
<td>-2.4766***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Ag – Place of Work</td>
<td>-3.8985***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Construction – Place of Work</td>
<td>-2.3145**</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2-1: t-Test scores for Comparisons of Day Labor Neighborhoods and Regional Means**

*Significant at the 90% confidence interval  
**Significant at the 95% confidence interval  
***Significant at the 99% confidence interval

2.4.1 Findings

The results of the difference of means tests demonstrate the importance of area employment characteristics for sustaining day labor activities. It is clear from these findings that day laborers seek work in neighborhoods with higher-than-average
number of people employed in the industries for which they are most often hired, as well as a higher-than-average number of residents employed in those industries. In the comparison between day labor neighborhoods and non-day labor neighborhoods, the former proved to have statistically higher levels of agricultural employment at the 99 percent confidence interval. Construction employment in day labor neighborhoods is also statistically significant, though at the 95 percent confidence interval. Day labor neighborhoods are also home to higher-than-average number of farmers and construction workers, both of which proved to be statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence interval. Homeowners make up the single largest employer of day laborers (Valenzuela et al. 2006), and the argument that employment opportunity for jornaleros is significantly higher in day labor neighborhoods than the rest of the SDMA is further bolstered by the finding that the average number of owner-occupied homes is higher in day labor neighborhoods than non-day labor neighborhoods. The difference is significant at the 90 percent confidence interval. Taken as a whole, these results suggest that day laborers employ a locational strategy that maximizes their chances of employment. The results regarding race are less conclusive than the employment-related findings, but support the argument that laborers are in fact locating in neighborhoods with greater total number of white residents. However, the percentage of white residents in a neighborhood did not prove to be significantly different between day labor neighborhoods and the regional means. So laborers are locating in areas with high numbers of white residents, but not necessarily “whiter” landscapes. The
inconclusive results regarding race in day labor neighborhoods illustrate a shortcoming of the method used in this analysis. There is almost certainly correlation between some of the racial and economic characteristics. In particular, white residents are much more likely to be homeowners than minorities (Cervero 2004; Palm 1985; Winant 1998; Wyly 2002) – so attributing causal significance to either of those variables in an analysis of day laborers’ locational strategies would be premature. The t-test results demonstrate a clear pattern at the regional scale, in which day-labor neighborhoods provide more employment opportunities in traditional day laborer industries than exist in the rest of the county. This analysis, however, does not focus on understanding differences between hiring sites or day labor neighborhoods, and further, the ways that jornaleros make themselves accessible through different types of sites. The following sections begin to parse out these distinctions and establish a foundation for the geo-spatial typology of day labor hiring sites. Understanding the differences between sites requires a deeper examination of day laborers areas of residence, mobility, and strategies for accessing employment opportunities.

### 2.5 Intra-site Variation in San Diego County

To better understand the differences between hiring sites, and provide a comprehensive foundation for the geo-spatial typology of day-labor sites, I performed a principal components analysis on a set of variables aggregated to the site level. Principal components analysis (PCF) is a popular type of factor analysis,
most commonly used to distinguish patterns within a dataset. The key aspect for quality PCF analysis is for the researcher to have a thorough understanding of the relevant variables so that the factor analysis is conducted on an appropriate dataset (Goddard and Kirby 1976). In this study, a dataset was constructed that included twenty total variables. Thirteen demographic variables were drawn from the census tracts that made up the day-labor neighborhood for each site. Because day-labor neighborhoods are not necessarily comprised of equal numbers of census tracts, and furthermore are all of different sizes, the neighborhood-demographic variables were adjusted to be comparable across sites. So, for example, median income is entered as the mean (average) of median income of the census tracts that make up each day-labor neighborhood. Population and housing variables were standardized by calculating their density within each day-labor neighborhood.

The demographic variables included in the dataset are population density, percent White, percent Hispanic, percent Black, percent Asian, average of median income, renter-occupied housing density, owner-occupied housing density, average of median rent, percent of neighborhood residents employed in construction (NAICS Code: 23), percent of neighborhood residents employed in agriculture (NAICS Code: 11), percent of neighborhood employment in construction (NAICS Code: 23), and percent of neighborhood employment in agriculture (NAICS Code: 11). Data on the racial composition of day labor neighborhoods was included for two reasons. First, the day laboring population in the SDMA is diverse. There are laborers of a variety of racial groups and nationalities. The demographics vary widely between sites.
however. Therefore, data on the four largest racial groups (US Census SF1) was included to see if locations with diverse day labor populations were linked with diverse neighborhoods. Second, most previous day labor research identifies racial difference between neighborhood residents and laborers as the primary driver of day labor conflicts. To address this issue requires a broader examination of the racialized landscapes that day laborers inhabit. Including the four largest racial groups in the factor analysis allows for greater detail regarding the racial composition of neighborhood residents, which is critical for understanding the potential for conflict at particular sites.

Information on housing status (renter-occupied housing units and owner-occupied housing units) and cost (median rent), drawn from the 2000 US Census SF1 and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2010 five-year estimates respectively. The housing variables address two dimensions of the production of day labor spaces. Data on owner-occupied housing density is a potential link to employment opportunity, as homeowners account for roughly half of all day labor employment. Day laborers are unlikely to be homeowners themselves, so data on renter-occupied housing and average median rent in a day labor neighborhood provides insights regarding the cost and density of potential housing for laborers near each site. Finally, data on employment characteristics of neighborhood residents, and the employment characteristics of each day labor neighborhood were included to examine variations in local employment characteristics between day labor neighborhoods.
A further five spatial variables were calculated using ArcGIS 10.0. These variables establish distance measurements from each site to land-use features that ethnographic portions of the research showed to be important in terms of laborers mobility (e.g., distance to a transit center) and accessibility for employers (e.g., distance to freeway on/off ramps).

Mobility characteristics are vital for examining the relational production of day labor spaces. The results of the t-tests indicate that the locations of hiring sites correspond most closely with neighborhood characteristics that suggest a higher potential for employment. But it does not matter how good the chances of employment are in a particular location if a laborer cannot access that space at the times when employment opportunity is greatest. Each laborer must commute from his place of residence to the hiring site of his choosing. In an industry where success depends on being in the right place at the right time, ahead of the other men looking for the same job, a short commute is very important. The highest volume hiring-time for jornaleros is between 6 and 9 a.m. Jobs that last a full day or longer are secured early in the morning as well. A long morning-commute time reduces a laborer’s chances for employment. Public transit is an important resource that day laborers use to make themselves accessible to potential employers. Public transit in San Diego consists of a fairly extensive bus system and trolley service to select areas in the southern part of San Diego County. Most of the San Diego Metropolitan Area is accessible by bus; however, transit is extremely slow. The trolley system is considerably more efficient in terms of distance that a person can travel and is
clearly the public transit of choice for day laborers in Southern San Diego County. Eight hiring sites in the region are located within one-half mile of a trolley stop; eleven are located within one mile. Several of the largest hiring sites in the region are at Home Depot stores located near stops on the San Diego Trolley (See Figures 2-4 and 2-5). So employment characteristics may explain why a site exists in a particular location, but mobility-based characteristics clearly influence the number of laborers who use the site. For this reason, distance from a trolley stop was added as a variable in the factor analysis.

Nearly every hiring site in the region is located such that it is accessible to potential employers. These sites are accessible at multiple scales. They are located in neighborhoods where demand for day-labor exists, and occupy spaces within each neighborhood that are convenient to employers’ paths of travel. Though it may need to be pointed out, employers of day laborers do not take public transit to hiring sites or to the locations where jobs take place. Therefore, informal hiring sites are located such that they are convenient and accessible for their automobile-based employers. Nearly one-third of the hiring sites in San Diego County are located within a quarter-mile of a freeway entrance or exit ramp, and nearly 90 percent are located within 500 feet of a major road. By maintaining sites in highly accessible positions, laborers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of their employers’ daily activity paths at the regional scale. The differences in strategies employed by laborers at each site speak to the complexity of day labor markets and the diversity that exists within the markets. Distance from a major road and distance from a freeway ramp were
calculated for each hiring site and included in the factor analysis. Distance from agricultural land use was calculated from land use records at two time periods, 1986 and 2008. Distance from agriculture in 2008 quantifies a site’s current accessibility for potential agricultural employers, while the distance from agriculture in 1986 incorporates a temporal variable that provides additional clarity regarding the connection between a hiring site and historical employment opportunities.

The final two variables included in the dataset are binary variables that proved to be important in the ethnographic research. The “TWNCTR” variable refers to sites that are located very near to historic/suburban town centers. This variable was included because it demonstrates the attachments to particular locations that jornaleros and employers establish over time. The “CAMP” variable was assigned to hiring sites where the majority of jornaleros resided in nearby canyons, living in squatter “campsites.” Day labor is one of the easiest pathways into the formal economy for recent immigrants without familial or social connections in the United States, many of whom enter the country with little or no financial resources. Camping in undeveloped open spaces allows new immigrants to accumulate capital more quickly by eliminating housing costs and reducing transportation costs in some cases. Laborers throughout the region refer to this type of housing arrangement as “living in the mountains.” The “CAMP” variable was assigned to sites where the majority of laborers “live in the mountains.” To be clear, this classification does not refer to sites with large numbers of “traditional homeless” laborers who live in cars, single room occupancy hotels, or sleep in developed spaces like parks or sidewalks.
In the following section, I begin to examine the intra-site variations within the county and quantify the relative importance of particular factors in producing different ‘types’ of day labor hiring sites.

2.5.1 RESULTS

Principal component analysis distilled the initial twenty variables to five factors that collectively account for slightly less than 75 percent of variance between the sites. The initial factors are rotated to maximize the differences between each factor, while retaining explanatory power. The remaining five factors can be understood as single factors that represent a bundle of variables that tend to cluster together (see Table 2-2). For example, the first factor weights population density, percent black, rental density, owner-occupied density, and historical distance from agriculture very high. This group of variables collectively represents what I call the “Traditional Inner City” factor. The sites that score highest for this factor are in densely populated areas, where agriculture has not been present for several decades or more. Factor two includes variables consistent with a low-income Hispanic neighborhood. Percent Hispanic has a very high positive factor load, while percent white has a very strong negative factor load. Average median rent and average median income both show strong negative factor loads.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor#</th>
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<th>Key Variables/Characteristics</th>
<th>Factor Load</th>
<th>Best Example Site</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Traditional Inner City</td>
<td>Population Density 0.8829, Percent Black 0.6881, Rental Density 0.8932, Owner-Occupied Density 0.6741, Distance to Agriculture 1986 0.7206</td>
<td>0.9459</td>
<td>El Cajon Blvd &amp; 33rd St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hispanic Neighborhood</td>
<td>Percent Non-White Hispanic 0.9055</td>
<td>0.9360</td>
<td>Imperial Beach Home Depot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Construction Town Center</td>
<td>Neighborhood Construction Employment 0.7448, Average Median Household Income 0.6922, Town Center Distance 0.7153, Resident Agricultural Employment 0.6304</td>
<td>0.8492</td>
<td>Eucalyptus Liquor - Lakeside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agricultural Legacy</td>
<td>Neighborhood Agricultural Employment 0.8488, Distance to Transit Center 0.7624, Distance to Freeway Ramp 0.6988, Resident Agricultural Employment 0.6922</td>
<td>0.8698</td>
<td>Pala Vista Mkt - Valley Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Migrant Campsites</td>
<td>Camper Occupied 0.4728, Distance to Agricultural Land Use 2008 0.7206, Distance to Agricultural Land Use 1986 0.7624, Distance to Agricultural Land Use 1986 0.6988</td>
<td>0.7049</td>
<td>Rancho Penasquitos &amp; SR-56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Principle Components Factors for San Diego County Day Labor Sites
Factor three is named “Construction-Town Center” as it shows high positive factor loads on several construction employment variables, as well as the town center binary variable. Construction-Town Center neighborhoods also show negative factor loads for average median rent and average median household income. These housing variables support the qualitative observation that many hiring sites exist in suburban town centers that have experienced disinvestment in recent years and now offer housing that is relatively affordable by San Diego County standards. The fourth factor is termed “Agricultural Legacy” as it shows high positive factor loads with agricultural employment variables. It also shows negative factor loads with the two distance-from-agriculture variables, indicating that these sites are located close to agricultural land use. Finally, the Agricultural Legacy factor shows positive factor loads for “distance to transit center” and “distance to freeway ramp” – so sites that score high on factor four are located farther from transit and freeway access points. Sites near-to migrant campsites score high on the fifth factor. This factor shows strong positive factor loads with the binary “Camper Occupied” variable, as well as percent Asian. Interestingly, the “Migrant Campsite” shows positive factor loads on both distance-from-agriculture variables. This finding goes against the common assumption and historical evidence that the laborers who took residence in the canyons worked in agriculture. The difference in factor loads between the “distance to agricultural land-use in 1986” and “distance to agricultural land-use in 2008” may provide some clarity however. The positive factor load for 2008 is nearly double that
of 1986, indicating that sites which score high on factor five are likely in areas that transitioned from agriculture to other land-uses in the past two decades.

When San Diego County day labor sites are mapped according to their highest-scoring factor, a few distinct patterns emerge (see Figure 2-2). Agricultural Legacy sites are primarily located on the suburban-rural fringe, though there are four sites near SR-56 in the center of the SDMA that also score highest on the Agricultural Legacy factor. Similarly, Migrant Campsites are clustered in the same general area, with a single outlier located in the southern portion of the metropolitan area. The map also challenges our normal understanding of “inner-cities”, as four sites in north-west San Diego County score highest on the “Traditional Inner City” variable. Sites that scored highest on Hispanic Neighborhood and Construction-Town Center factors show the least obvious patterns. Hispanic Neighborhood sites appear to be located along the Highway 78 corridor in northern San Diego County, but there are also high scoring sites in Lakeside, Chula Vista, and Imperial Beach. Sites that scored highest on the Construction-Town Center factor do not follow a discernible pattern, which is somewhat surprising, considering that the Town Center binary variable was only assigned to sites that exhibited particular spatial characteristics. The ambiguity of the findings for some of the factors speaks to the messiness inherent to the production of day-labor spaces. The factors that draw particular laborers to particular hiring sites are complex. They intersect and overlap. The relative strength of each factor score, and the cluster of variables it represents, for each site, demonstrates the relationships that together produce day labor space of
different “types.” This complexity is reflected in the factor scores for each site (see Table 2-3). A number of sites score nearly equally on two or more factors, while others exhibit a very strong fit with a single factor. Therefore, even when a site scores highest on a particular factor, that does not mean that the variables common to another factor are not also important, and influence the size, or longevity of a particular day-labor hiring site. Though the factor weights give an appearance of messiness, it is exactly that messiness that demonstrates the potential for quantifying aspects of the relational production of day labor spaces. For example, the informal site at El Cajon Blvd and 33rd Street scores very high on factor one, Traditional Inner City, with a value of 4.80 (this was the highest value of any factor, for any site). The second highest scoring factor is Agricultural Legacy, with a value of 0.72. The relative strength of the factor one score compared to factor four indicates that the variables associated with factor one are much more important in the production of this particular day labor space. With that information, support efforts can be tailored to the needs of laborers who would choose this type of site. In other cases, the scores demonstrate a more complex production of day labor space. The hiring site at North Quince Street and Mission in Escondido scores highest on factor three, Construction-Town Center, with a value of 1.49. It also scores relatively high on factor two, Hispanic Neighborhood, with a value of 1.20. This is perhaps unsurprising, since some of the key variables in each factor overlap (i.e. average median rent, average median income), but the factor weights certainly show a greater degree of complexity in processes that produce this particular day labor space. These are but
two examples to illustrate a larger point regarding the utility of the factor analysis in establishing a geospatial typology of day labor sites. The factor analysis establishes a neat grouping of factors that could be applied directly as a framework for analysis in a purely academic setting. However, day labor research is policy oriented by nature and therefore, the typology must be applicable for day labor policy and support efforts. While the factors do highlight neighborhood and locational characteristics, they are insufficient for planning purposes. Day labor policy must recognize the different needs of particular groups of laborers, and tailor support efforts to meet those needs. The factor scores for each site provide insights that can be useful in planning and policy efforts, but should not be understood as perfect representations of the character of each site or the needs of the laborers who use the space. For example, the needs of housed, poor laborers vary less by race or location than do the needs of different groups of homeless laborers (ie. undocumented migrant laborers living in canyons versus US citizens living in cars, shelters, or on the streets).

Meeting the needs of laborers requires contextualizing the quantitative findings with qualitative data regarding the composition of laborer populations at each site. When all the factors are considered collectively and viewed in relation to each other, a number of common socio-spatial characteristics emerge. These common characteristics form the foundation of the geographically-sensitive typology of day labor sites.
Figure 2-2: San Diego County Hiring Sites by Highest Scoring Factor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor1</th>
<th>Factor2</th>
<th>Factor3</th>
<th>Factor4</th>
<th>Factor5</th>
<th>FactorRank1</th>
<th>FactorRank2</th>
<th>FactorRank3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fallbrook Formal/St. Mary's Rd</td>
<td>0.205372</td>
<td>-0.17051</td>
<td>0.731805</td>
<td>-0.91284</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marcos Home Depot</td>
<td>-0.69494</td>
<td>1.020055</td>
<td>0.196729</td>
<td>-0.54619</td>
<td>-0.66239</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Factor Scores and Ranks for San Diego County Hiring Sites
2.6 Geospatial Typology of Day Labor Sites

Incorporating all of the factors at work in the production of day labor spaces, and the spatial organization of day labor markets at the regional scale is quite difficult. However, it is only by acknowledging and incorporating the multiplicity of social processes at work that successful policy can be designed and implemented in San Diego and other metropolitan areas. This typology is designed to do just that, by informing day labor outreach, organization and policy. The types of day labor sites that emerged from the analysis are urban-informal-connected, canyon-adjacent, suburban-commercial-hub, and formal workers’ centers. The types of sites were selected to extend and improve earlier classification schemes by highlighting critical relationships between hiring sites and elements of the socio-spatial landscape. In particular, this geographically sensitive framework improves upon earlier definitions by accounting for the relationship between day laborers’ home and work environments. Furthermore, the categorization allows for laborers’ agency within the site selection process by acknowledging the strategies they use to overcome constraints on their mobility. The types are also broad enough to allow for flexibility within each category; the importance of which is clear from examination of the factors scores for each site in the previous section.
Figure 2-3: Day Labor Sites by Type
The typology of sites presented in this chapter is a heuristic device and site categorizations are subject to change, as the production of day labor spaces changes over time. Additionally, the four different types are drawn from observations of sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area, and, therefore, may not be directly applicable in other regions. The socio-spatial relationships that these types highlight, however, are important aspects of the social production of space in cities throughout the world, and could easily be translated into other contexts by accounting for additional local specificity.

The first type of day labor site is the urban-informal-connected site. Urban-informal-connected sites exhibit the greatest diversity in terms of situational characteristics of the four site types. Some of the sites are located in low-income or minority neighborhoods, while others are in higher-income, predominantly white neighborhoods. In San Diego, ethnographic data showed that four of the urban-informal-connected sites exist in their current location almost entirely due to their relative accessibility via public transit. In contrast, two such sites are used almost exclusively by laborers who live within walking distance of the site (Figures 2-4 and 2-5). The three characteristics common to all of the urban-informal-connected sites are that they are 1) located in urban landscapes, 2) connected to a retail location associated with the industries in which laborers are most often employed, 3) informal in nature, 4) Few of the laborers are recent arrivals to the area. These characteristics are important from a planning perspective. The needs of jornaleros at urban-informal-connected sites are different than the needs of the laborers at other types of
sites. Furthermore, by virtue of their presence in urbanized landscapes, jornaleros at urban-informal-connected sites are less-noticeable compared to jornaleros who congregate in more rural or suburban areas, and potentially less-likely to generate conflicts. That each of the urban-informal-connected sites is linked to a retail establishment is also important for conflict management. If jornaleros are viewed as problematic by the connected store, there are established contact people that day labor leaders or organizers may speak with to ameliorate the problems. These firms may have financial incentive to work with day laborers rather than attempt to see them relocated (see Chapter 6). Sites classified as urban-informal-connected tend to score high on factor one (Traditional Inner-City), factor two (Hispanic Neighborhood), and in fewer cases, factor three (Construction-Town Center). Very few score high on factor four (Agricultural Legacy) or five (Migrant Campsite). Examining the scores for a particular site on each factor can provide some insight regarding the particular processes that make that particular location work as a day labor space. In some cases, the scores may also be used to predict divisions within the day labor population that could produce internal conflict and impede efforts to support and organize laborers.
Figure 2-4: Urban-Informal-Connected Sites by size and rail-transit proximity.
Figure 2-5: Urban-Informal-Connected Sites in Central San Diego by size and rail-transit proximity
The second type of day labor hiring site in San Diego is *canyon-adjacent* site. The rugged physical geography of the San Diego area has made uniform development difficult, and in spite of aggressive suburban development of the past three decades, there exists a considerable amount of undeveloped open space in canyons and mountainous parts of the region (Pryde 2004). These spaces have been informally used for squatter housing for many years, first seasonally by migrant farm workers and more recently by undocumented immigrants who live in the canyons year round. Many of the migrant campers look for work as day laborers in the areas near the canyons where they camp (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994).

Undeveloped canyons exist throughout the region, and many day labor sites are used by laborers who “live in the mountains”; however, canyon-adjacent type refers specifically to sites that exist in their current location first and foremost due to the space’s proximity to large squatter campsites. The housing stock and land value of surrounding neighborhoods put traditional housing options beyond the financial means of jornaleros. Lack of affordable housing, combined with minimal public transit service in northern San Diego County, produces a spatial mismatch between the neighborhoods where jornaleros can afford to live, and areas where demand for their labor exists. Living in the mountains is one way that jornaleros make themselves available to potential employers, and simultaneously reduce their cost of living. The sites in north San Diego, located near SR-56, are prime examples of canyon-adjacent hiring sites (Figure 2-6). These sites would not exist if not for the population of laborers who live in the nearby canyons and access the sites on foot or
bicycle. From a planning perspective, canyon-adjacent sites must be engaged with differently than other types of day labor sites. The largely undocumented, recently arrived, migrants require different services than laborers who look for work at any of the other three types of sites. Also, the potential for these jornaleros’ presence to generate community conflict is not limited to their activities at the hiring site, but also to their housing status.

Canyon-adjacent sites score highest on factor five (migrant campsite), a fairly unsurprising, and somewhat circular, finding considering that the CAMP variable was assigned to sites where the majority of jornaleros were living in canyons. In examining canyon-adjacent sites from a planning perspective, examining each site’s score for the other four factors provides considerable insights regarding the potential for conflict. For example, we might expect to find less resistance to day labor activities around canyon-adjacent sites that score high on factors two (Hispanic Neighborhood) and four (Agricultural Legacy), than we would at sites with high values for factors one or three.
Figure 2-6: Canyon-adjacent sites off SR-56
The third type of hiring site is comprised of sites located near suburban or ex-urban commercial hubs. This type of hiring site highlights the locational strategy of day labor sites in areas with low population density, as well as the economic gravity and attachment to place that is developed at a site over time. In contrast to urban-connected informal sites, suburban commercial hubs may or may not be “connected” to a retail outlet that serves the industries in which day laborers are most often hired. Suburban-commercial-hub sites are located at the current or historical commercial center of suburban and extra-urban cities. The locations of these sites can be understood as spatial effects of the process of (sub)urban expansion. There is an informal day labor site connected to the main shopping center in nearly every municipality on the rural-suburban fringe of the metropolitan area. The locational logic for these sites is fairly simple. The population density and employment opportunities are low in these areas, so sites must be convenient to the primary commercial activity centers of each small town. As suburban development has continued in the region, many of the neighborhoods that were once located on the rural-suburban margins of the SDMA have become more extensively developed. The process often diminishes the economic centrality of the historic town center, as population density increases and new commercial hubs are built throughout the city. This process is quite similar to the hegemonic narrative of the decline of downtown during the era of automobile-based urban design and suburban sprawl, a common denominator in the history of urbanization in the United States beginning in the middle of the 20th century. That the story of inner-city decline is so similar to that of
suburban town-centers speaks to the increasingly “urban” nature of early suburban edge cities, as well as the requirement of cyclical decline within the capitalist system (Harvey 2005, 2008; Smith 1984, 1996, 2002, 2005). What is most interesting about suburban commercial hub sites is that they remain active, even as the commercial center to which the site is connected declines in relative importance.

The suburban-town-center site type also provides an opportunity to examine one of the shortcomings of the factor analysis. Factor three (construction-town center) included the binary variable TWNCTR which was assigned to sites that were located in suburban town centers in the SDMA. The factor analysis found that neighborhoods identified as town-centers correlated with those that have high levels of employment in construction (among day labor neighborhoods, which collectively exhibit higher levels of construction employment than regional averages), low-cost housing, and low median income levels. Therefore, a site could score highest on the construction-town center factor, without actually being located in a town center. The locational characteristics of the town-centers are important to understand if the typology is meant to address the potential for day labor conflict, as well as the characteristics that produce a particular type of day-labor site. Sites located in suburban town centers are not connected to stores serving the traditional day labor industries. Therefore, jornaleros who congregate at suburban commercial town centers will encounter many more members of the bystander public than would laborers congregating adjacent to a home improvement store.
Of the four types used for this analysis, the *formal workers’ center* is the only type that remains unchanged from Valenzuela’s classification system. Formal workers’ centers are unique among hiring sites because the spaces are designated specifically for the purpose of day labor hiring. Government, non-profit, or other community-based organizations determine the locations of the centers; day laborers often are left out of the site selection process (Camou 2002; Toma and Esbenshade 2001). In most cases, establishing a workers’ center requires that the center’s location be approved through public planning processes. This is most common when funding for the center comes from local government agencies (Fine 2006; Toma and Esbenshade 2001). Therefore, the particular locations selected for the hiring sites reflect the relationship of local government and the day labor population within their jurisdiction. The process by which local communities or governments decide to establish a formal workers’ center is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and was not taking into account in the quantitative analysis because these types of relationships with local government agencies and nonprofits are very difficult to measure.

The demographic composition of jornaleros who use formal hiring sites also varies from center to center for a number of reasons. Centers that receive their funding directly from local governments often require that laborers show proof of citizenship, or other documentation indicating that they can work in the United States legally – a practice which undocumented laborers find problematic. The geographic situation of the formal centers can also affect the composition of laborers who look for work there (Crotty and Bosco 2008). Because the process for
establishing a formal workers center is manifestly different than an informal hiring site, formal workers centers must be treated as a separate entity within the geographic typology of day labor sites. The results of factor analysis can, however, potentially be used to shed light on the connections between particular formal workers’ centers and the neighborhoods where they are located. That information can be used to provide context for the successes and failures of each formal center.

2.7 CONCLUSION
The results from this research make clear that day laborers do not choose the locations of hiring sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area at random. Rather, they demonstrate a locational strategy that maximizes their chances of employment within each laborer’s mobility constraints and reflects historical social and economic relations that are embedded in the landscape. This preliminary exploration does provide some evidence of the connections between informal day labor activity and the spatial organization of formal-sector employment in construction and agricultural industries, suggesting that the demand for flexible labor is an important factor in influencing the location of day labor hiring sites. At the regional scale, day labor sites are located in neighborhoods with higher levels of employment in construction and agriculture. Higher than average numbers of owner-occupied homes are also found in day labor neighborhoods, providing further support for the argument that laborers employ a strategy that positions them in spaces where job opportunities are greatest. Given the findings of this research, planners and government officials should understand the presence of day laborers in their communities as a reflection...
of the local economy and demand for temporary labor, rather than the direct result of immigration or other demographic changes.

The results regarding race at the regional scale are somewhat ambiguous. Day labor neighborhoods also have higher white population than the regional average; however, the percentage of white residents in day labor neighborhoods is not significantly higher than is found in the rest of the SDMA. The correlation between race and home ownership raises interesting questions regarding the ways that day laborers interpret the landscapes of day labor neighborhoods. It also illustrates the legacy of racial discrimination in U.S. housing markets. Future research may seek to adjust some of the methods used in this analysis to provide greater clarity on the relationship between race and employment for day laborers.

The analysis of the situational characteristics of hiring sites in the SDMA represents a first step toward geographically sensitive planning for day labor issues. Quantitative approaches, like principal components factor analysis help to numerically demonstrate the complexity of the production of day labor spaces. The factor analysis is especially useful in demonstrating the overlapping processes that produce day labor spaces of different types. By examining each site’s score for each of the five factors identified, we can see which groups of factors appear to have a role in the long-term existence of the site. In this way, the factor analysis establishes a quantifiable measurement of the relational production of day labor spaces. Unfortunately, the factor analysis did not prove entirely up to the task for establishing a functional geo-spatial typology on its own. The typology presented
drew from all of the quantitative findings, in combination with qualitative data collected over several years. I believe this mixed-method approach, which is informed by relational theory, provides the best framework to-date for analyzing day labor sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area. Each of the hiring site types presented serves a different segment of the day-laboring population. Strategies to manage day labor conflict, or provide services for laborers, must account for these differences if they hope to be successful. The typology should not be understood as complete. The analysis highlights the importance of understanding how a place “works” for effective planning (Mitchell 2003). True understanding of how places work requires that the research be conducted at the micro-geographic scale, or the scale of everyday experience (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001). The mapping and locational analysis presented in this chapter is productive from a methodological perspective as well. In grounded theory, early analysis of qualitative data is used to direct and improve the data generated in later fieldwork (Curtis et al. 2000; Bryant and Charmaz 2007). In this dissertation, the insights gleaned from mapping and quantitative analysis were used in much the same way. In the next chapter, I use the typology of day-labor sites as a framework to examine the connections between the social and economic lives of jornaleros during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.
Chapter 3

The Social Geography of Day Labor:
Informal Responses to the Economic Downturn; 2008-2010

3.1 Introduction

Day labor is one type of low-wage contingent employment that has grown in the past 30 years as neoliberal economic reforms have become entrenched in the North American Economy (Theodore 2007; Valenzuela Jr. 2003a). That undocumented immigrants comprised roughly 75 percent of the United States day labor population in 2004 reflects the fact that undocumented immigrant laborers, primarily from Mexico and Central America, were and are the preferred workers for employers hoping to cut costs through wage reductions and “flexibilizing” their work force (Theodore 2007, 251). Employers often accomplish further cost savings by avoiding health and safety regulations, violating labor law, and in some instances simply failing to compensate employees for their labor. In the manic drive for profitability, employers in a variety of sectors take advantage of, and, in fact, depend upon undocumented immigrants’ unwillingness to report labor abuses and violations for fear of deportation (Harvey 2005; Theodore 2007). Labor and human rights
violations are quite common in the contemporary day labor market, regardless of documentation status. The systematic rollback of labor protections that grew from the mid-20th century up to today is but one aspect of neoliberal economic policy that shapes the contemporary day-labor markets of the United States.

The growth of the day-labor market over the past 20 years is also intimately tied to the growth of housing markets in the United States (Sassen 2000; Theodore 2007). Investment in housing, combined with all time high levels of mortgage refinancing “boosted the United States domestic market for consumer goods and services” further increasing the domestic demand for cheap labor – primarily provided by undocumented immigrants, many of whom settled in non-traditional immigrant destinations where new consumer demand existed (Harvey 2008, 29; Smith and Winders 2008; Winders 2012). It should come as little surprise then that day labor activity increased during the same time period and, similar to transnational immigrants, located hiring sites in areas where demand for labor was greatest (Crotty 2007). According to David Harvey, housing is an industry where excess capital could be “disposed of” during periods of economic stagnation, thus stabilizing the US economy and, by virtue of the intense connectivity of global capital markets, the global economy in the short term (2008, 29). As Harvey and others argue, the processes by which capitalism braces itself against its inherent instability are directly tied to processes of urbanization. And yet the processes of capital investment in the urban environment serve to extend inequality in terms of access to capital, opportunity, and even urban space itself. Inequality is, thereby, “etched on the spatial
forms of our cities”, which include highly segregated neighborhoods, fortress architecture, gated communities, and privatized public spaces kept under constant surveillance (Harvey 2008, 32). The extreme disparities in income that are characteristic of the neoliberal capitalist economy are in sharp relief in contemporary day labor markets as well (Harvey 2005, Theodore 2007). It is quite common to see wealthy home owners drive luxury automobiles to a nearby shape up site where they hire the poorest able-bodied men they can find to do work that is beneath their status: picking weeds, digging ditches, or carrying heavy boxes.

However, it would be wrong to define all day labor employment relations are purely exploitive. Some laborers find employment for extended periods of time, and thanks to the informal nature of day labor employment, jornaleros are free to walk away from a job that they deem too dangerous, or employers they view as untrustworthy. Day labor work is also a way for individuals to develop skills in a number of construction trades in a relatively short period of time, as the vicissitudes of day labor work may have a man painting, roofing, gardening, and framing a building in the same week. Advocates of day labor work often point out the fact that most day-labor work pays slightly above minimum wage, and skilled jobs such as plumbing, masonry, and electrical work often pay considerably more (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). However, due to the intermittent nature of their employment, very few earn above poverty wages, even during periods of relatively high employment (Theodore 2007; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Ethnographic accounts of the lives of day laborers from the last decade uniformly demonstrated the social and economic
struggles of jornaleros, as well as their ingenuity and resourcefulness in adapting to periodic shifts in labor demand (Crotty and Bosco 2008; Malpica 2002; Turnovsky 2004, 2006; Wakin 2008; Walter 2004).

The role that financial institutions and arrangements developed to facilitate a global investments in (sub)urban real estate markets played in creating the economic downturn, now popularly known as “The Great Recession” (Elsby, Hobjin, and Sahin 2010), is perhaps most eloquently and succinctly explained by David Harvey.

Financial institutions and arrangements set in train in the 1980s – securitizing and packaging local mortgages for sale to investors worldwide, and setting up new vehicles to hold collateralized debt obligations - played a crucial role. Their many benefits included spreading risk and permitting surplus savings pools easier access to surplus housing demand; they also brought aggregate interest rates down, while generating immense fortunes for the financial intermediaries who worked these wonders. But spreading the risk does not eliminate it. Furthermore, the fact that it can be distributed so widely encourages even riskier local behaviors, because liability can be transferred elsewhere. Without adequate risk-assessment controls, this wave of financialization has not turned into the so-called subprime mortgage and housing asset-value crisis (2008, 32).

Harvey goes on to explain how the failure of these new financial arrangements first and most seriously impacted the already-poor in US cities, in particular inner-city minority homeowners and single female headed households (2008). Harvey’s focus on those most affected by the market failures stands in contrast to the majority of media attention, which concentrated on efforts to stabilize markets and protect
those employed at the highest end of the banking and financial services sector. And yet, even Harvey’s analysis is somewhat incomplete because he articulates how the failure of financial structures at the global scale created “serious implications” for the already-poor, but he fails to describe the specific challenges or how those most viscerally affected are adapting to these new and serious challenges. This disconnect between macro-level analysis and intensive and more in-depth qualitative research is common in critical geographic research. Theoretical sophistication and critical analysis are welcome among academics, but effective communication to audiences outside of academia, such as planners and policy makers, is often limited. In this chapter, I demonstrate how a mixed-methods approach can address this disconnect.

The first and most important goal for this chapter is to highlight the role that day labor spaces play as part of the survival strategies employed by individuals who were perilously poor even before the ‘great recession’. In telling their stories and highlighting their individual and collective agency, I connect empirically grounded accounts of people’s economic struggles to structural processes that generate inequitable social and economic outcomes—both across the globe and on the street corner. It is my hope that these connections strengthen the small body of ethnographic research that situates observations within critical analysis of neoliberal ideology (See Fairbanks 2011; and Fairbanks and Lloyd 2011). The research should further demonstrate the effectiveness of mixed-methods research for scaling findings up, from the microgeographic to the regional scale. This chapter will also demonstrate the compatibility of relational perspectives on place and traditional
landscape analysis in human geography. Drawing on relational understandings of spatiality and landscape analysis, I use the geo-spatial typology of day labor sites developed in the previous chapter as a framework to analyze how the economic downturn affected day labor markets in the SDMA. My goal is also to analyze the ways in which individuals from disparate backgrounds utilized day labor work as part of their economic survival strategies during this difficult period. However, the utility of this framework is not limited to understanding the effects of the economic downturn. It also generates a better understanding of the connections between the social and economic lives of day laborers in the region in all contexts. For this reason, the findings from this research could be used to improve day labor support, organization, and advocacy efforts throughout the United States. Before examining day labor markets specifically, it is important to understand exactly how the economic downturn from 2007-2011 impacted the San Diego region.

3.2 Background

The San Diego Metropolitan Area is, unfortunately, a good location to examine the impacts of the recent economic downturn. The economic history of San Diego is one of repetitive housing crises, dating back as far as the 1800’s (Davis, Miller, and Mayhew 2003). Similar to the situation in metropolitan areas throughout the United States, a combination of hyper-inflated housing prices and subprime mortgage financing created a highly unstable real estate market, which began to collapse in early 2007. In the first quarter of 2007, there were 1183 residential foreclosures in San Diego County, a nearly 700 percent increase from the previous year (Bouton
2007). Even in 2011, the ratio of homes in foreclosure to the entire housing stock is 1 to 237 (data from http://www.realtytrac.com/home/, and citation available from http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=111494514). Families who were able to remain in their homes were still affected, as property values fell by roughly 40 percent from 2006 to 2008 countywide (Bennett 2010; Toscano 2010a, 2010b) (see figure 3-1). The housing crisis intensified as the effects of the downturn spread from real estate and banking industries to virtually every sector of the economy, increasing unemployment rate in the county from 4 percent in 2005 to 10.5 percent in 2010 (Bennett 2010).

![Median Price of Homes Sold in San Diego County](image)

**Figure 3-1: Median Price of Homes Sold in San Diego County 2004-2010².**

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² Data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD).
Though the downturn negatively impacted most sectors of the local economy, the effect on the construction industry was immediate and has worsened over time. As credit dried up for new and ongoing construction projects throughout the region, the number of residential construction permits approved fell by nearly 25 percent per year from 2006-2008 (State of California EDD). Much of the overall decrease in construction permits is the result of a massive decline in multi-unit housing projects as investors abandoned apartment to condo conversion projects throughout the city. The number of permits for multi-unit housing construction fell by 95 percent, from 8273 in 2005 to 448 in 2008 (Figure 3-2). Apartment to condominium conversions were primarily undertaken by the types of small construction firms and specialty contractors that most frequently hired day laborers (Poitevin 2005). Therefore the near total elimination of condo-conversion projects in the region was particularly bad for day laborers’ employment opportunities. The decreased employment in construction was not limited to the informal sector. More than 20,000 total construction jobs were lost in 2008 and 2009; roughly 1/3 of the full-time industry employees (Toscano 2010a) (See Figure 3-3). Two particular types of construction work were hit hardest: residential building construction and specialty trade contractors (Figure 3-4). These two are some of the most common types of construction work for which day laborers are hired (State of California EDD, Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Considering the high rates of informal or day labor employment within the construction industry, it is safe to assume that the actual decline in total economic opportunity has been much greater than 33 percent. The
combined effects of the collapse of the construction industry and the decreasing level of disposable income available to individual homeowners generated considerable effects in day labor markets throughout the region.

Figure 3-2: Total building permits approved annually in San Diego County, 2000-2009. Data from EDD
Figure 3-3: Total Construction Employment San Diego County, 01/2000 – 11/2010. Data from EDD.
3.3 Grounded Effects of the Downturn

Employment data at the regional scale demonstrate the severity of the economic downturn for the entire county. However, these data do little to shed light on the spatialized effects of the downturn on day labor markets throughout San Diego County. In order to better understand the effects of the downturn on particular sites and individual laborers, I draw from the qualitative data collected for this
dissertation. The findings presented in this chapter are drawn from data collected from regular surveys of hiring sites throughout the region, as well as participant observation, interviews, and archival research from 2006-2011. I collected data from 2008-2010, and during this period I identified and regularly surveyed the majority of hiring sites. I visited each site at least four times per year on three-month intervals, recording the number of laborers and their demographic characteristics (race, gender, and when possible age). As the mapping of the sites was an ongoing process, there is incomplete data for some of the sites during the period from 2008-2010. As a result, it is impossible to precisely estimate the number of laborers at the regional scale for 2008 or 2009. The data for 2009 are complete enough, and it is possible to use it to compare with average site size and estimates of labor market participation in 2010. Insights from the comparison are further bolstered by analyzing the change in average site size according to site types.

Six of the forty-five total sites were analyzed further because these sites exhibited particular site, situational, and relational characteristics that were identified as common to many of the sites in the SDMA through visual surveys and landscape analysis. The selected spaces represent the four general types of day labor sites in San Diego introduced in the previous chapter: urban informal connected, canyon adjacent, suburban commercial hub, formal workers’ centers. I conducted extended participant observation at two urban-informal-connected sites. The first selected was the Point Loma Home Depot, located near the San Diego Sports Arena. The Sports Arena Home Depot is a classic example of a transit-accessible urban-informal-
connected site. I also spent time at an urban-informal-connected site in the City Height’s neighborhood of San Diego. The site is located adjacent to a paint store, and is located in a neighborhood where the majority of the residents are minorities. The jornaleros at this site arrive on foot, or in their personal vehicles. Very few use public transit for their commute. The canyon-adjacent site selected for further analysis was located just south of SR-56 at the intersection of Azuaga St. and Rancho Penasquitos Blvd. I also spent extended time at two suburban-commercial-hub hiring sites: the Vons shopping center in Vista, and the site near the intersection of Tavern Rd and Alpine Blvd, in Alpine. For the dissertation, I conducted participant observation at Confia en Ti, a formal workers center in Escondido. At each site participant observation was conducted for 2 to 4 weeks, depending on the circumstances at each site and the effect my presence had on laborers and area stakeholders. For example, I spent less time at the canyon-adjacent site than any other because my presence was more noticeable, and I was wary of negatively impacting the jornalero’s employment opportunities. During the fieldwork at each site, informal interviews and short, on-the-spot surveys with area stakeholders were also conducted. Informal interviews varied in length, from short exchanges lasting just a few minutes, to conversations that took place over several hours at a hiring site. On average, about half of the laborers who regularly visited a hiring site were interviewed over the two to four week participant observation period. Abbreviated notes were collected during participant observation and informal interviews. At the end of each day the notes were used to guide the production of audio fieldnotes,
which were later transcribed and coded using N-Vivo qualitative data analysis software. The data generated from the four primary research sites were supplemented with data collected during much shorter periods of observation at the other forty-five sites in the region. The data collection methods in this study were chosen to create a comfortable research environment and maintain as much detail from observation and informal interviews as possible. Informal interviewing and data collection are common and effective research methods when working with groups that are likely to be uncomfortable with the formal interview process (Herbert 1997, 2000).

3.3.1 Effects of the Downturn on San Diego Area Day Labor Markets

Survey and interview data indicate that the number and nature of day labor work in the San Diego Metropolitan Area has changed as a result of the economic downturn. Laborers throughout the region have experienced a severe drop in total employment opportunities. During the height of the housing boom, many reported finding 3 to 4 full days of work in a good week (Crotty 2007; Seymour 2008; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Though there is some variation between the different types of hiring sites, by 2010 few laborers reported finding more than 1 full day of work per week on average. At nearly every hiring site I encountered two to three laborers who experienced jobless spells of a month or longer (Fieldnotes 2009–2010). The economic challenges posed by the reduction in total jobs are exacerbated

3 A “full day” of work is defined as 8 hours of paid employment.
by the changing nature of the few jobs that remain. Historically day laborers sought work in the early morning hours, waiting to be picked up by construction or labor contractors for jobs that lasted a full day at a minimum. Many laborers found employment that would last the length of a construction job, which could be months at a time. Those full-day or multi-day jobs have almost completely disappeared. The majority of employers today are individual homeowners who need help with jobs lasting less than half a day. These are the types of jobs that laborers would not have accepted during periods of high employment, especially early the in the day when there is still a chance of being hired for a full day job. George Rodriguez, a labor organizer in Vista, described the best case scenario in the contemporary day labor market as finding a three to four hour job in the morning and another three to four hour job in the afternoon (Personal Communication 9/6/2010).

Changes to the source and length of day labor jobs have altered the daily routine within day labor spaces. During periods of high employment, sites were active as early as 5 a.m., hiring activities were concentrated from 6 to 9 a.m., and most day labor hiring activity ceased by 12 p.m. Due to the nearly complete absence of jobs that last eight hours or more, fewer laborers are arriving at the sites in the early morning hours. George Rodriguez believes this is partly the result of psychological depression which is becoming more apparent among the men he waits with each day (Personal Communication 1/10/2011). Long-stretches without employment lower jornaleros’ inclination to arrive at the site early. The same long-stretches without employment cause laborers to be desperate for employment of any kind. As a result,
day labor activity also continues later into the day, often as late as 6 p.m. as increasingly desperate laborers wait in hopes of finding employment for even an hour (Fieldnotes 01/2009 – 08/2011).

Data from site surveys provide a somewhat contradictory picture of changes to the day labor market during the economic downturn. The average number of laborers per site increased from 23.55 in 2009 to 25.55 in 2010. Taken alone, this data would indicate that the number of day labor market participants increased during the downturn – a result that would not be especially surprising given the 33 percent unemployment rate in the formal construction industry during the downturn. However, when the survey data are adjusted to better represent the day labor market participation rather than site occupancy, the findings are quite different. The actual number of “day laborers” who normally use a site is also a function of employment patterns at a particular time. During periods of high employment, many laborers found jobs three to four days a week. By 2009, few jornaleros were working four days a week, but none reported multi-week spells of unemployment that they experienced in 2010. Since more time was spent waiting for work, a greater proportion of the day-labor population was counted in visual surveys in 2010 compared to 2009. When a jornalero is working at a job site, he cannot be counted as part of a field survey at a hiring site. To include these men as part of the labor force that depends on the hiring sites requires making assumptions regarding the laborers’ likelihood of finding work on a given day and then multiplying the observed number of laborers by (1+daily employment chances). Unfortunately site-specific
employment data do not exist for all of the hiring sites in the SDMA, so regional estimates must be based on data from a small sample of sites. This doesn’t mean that the estimates are without utility. There are no structural barriers to entry and exit from the day labor market, so perfect estimation is impossible. Based on informal interviews from 2009-2010, I estimate that jornaleros found work an average of two days per week in 2009, and one day per week in 2010, the average number of day-labor market participants per-site decreases slightly from 30.27 in 2009 to 29.19 in 2010. This method of day-labor market participation unquestionably under-counts the total number of laborers because it does not account for laborers who were absent from hiring sites for weeks or months at a time on jobs. Interviews with laborers and other stakeholders near hiring sites support these adjusted findings, which indicate that the overall decline in day labor market participation may be as high as 75 percent since 2005. From 2005 to 2010, the number of laborers looking for work at the Confia en Ti workers’ center in Escondido fell from more than fifty per day to less than ten; the number of jornaleros at the informal hiring site outside the workers’ center also fell by 80 percent or more (Seymour 2008; Personal Communication 07/01/2010). The results show that substantial variability exists in the changes to site size and demographic composition across the research area. In fact, a number of sites experienced growth in size, racial diversity, and services offered by laborers at the site during the research period. All of these changes took place during a time period that net migration from Mexico to the United States has
severely decreased or even reversed as a result of the recession (Gentsch and Massey 2011; Massey, Rugh, and Pren 2010; Cave 2011).

3.4 Shrinking Sites: Canyon Adjacent and Suburban Commercial Hubs

Throughout the region, the size of canyon adjacent and suburban commercial hub sites has decreased. As late as 2008, fifty or more laborers routinely used the canyon-adjacent site at SH-56 and Rancho Penasquitos each day. In 2010, the average number of laborers at the site was down to twenty. Canyon spaces in Northern San Diego County have long housed recent and seasonal migrants from Mexico and Central America who come to the area to work in local agriculture and construction industries (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994, Crotty 2007). As such, the laborers who congregate at canyon-adjacent sites tend to have fewer and weaker social connections in the area. Very few of the laborers who use canyon-adjacent hiring sites have family locally. Many are working to support their children who live in Mexico or Central America. Their spatial disconnection from familial responsibly allows these laborers considerable flexibility in terms of relocating in search of employment. During the downturn many of these migrants chose to leave the region in search of better employment opportunities or areas where they have stronger social ties and, thus, may be better able to weather the economic downturn (Interview Notes, 5/21/2009).
Even before the housing market collapsed in San Diego, there was considerable pressure on canyon residents to relocate. In 2005, a number of evictions were carried out in one of the largest migrant camping areas in Northern San Diego (Raferty 2010). In the short term after the evictions, laborers were forced out of the canyons where they had collectively lived for more than thirty years. The impetus for these evictions was the health and safety of canyon residents – and the cliff top residents who viewed the residents as a criminal threat. The evictions were justified for environmental health and safety (Raferty 2010). Though it went unspoken, perhaps the largest purpose of the evictions was that laborers were considered an eyesore and threatened property values for cliff top homeowners. These evictions replicated similar relocation efforts within the same canyons, when the first suburban housing developments were constructed on the margins of the scenic canyons where migrant agricultural workers slept between grueling shifts in the local strawberry and tomato fields (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994). Today, similar processes are occurring on the rural-urban fringe of cities throughout the globe as developers increasingly view land occupied by informal squatter settlements as ripe for formal development and often forcibly evict occupants from their long-time, if not privately owned, residences (Davis 2006; Harvey 2008; Neuwirth 2005; Smart 2001).

The number of laborers also decreased at suburban commercial hub sites. Very few of the men who look for work at these sites are homeless; however, this higher degree of local rootedness does not necessarily protect them from the economic hardships that may push people to move in search of a better job. Interview data
suggests that undocumented laborers whose children were born in the United States were among the first to leave the region in search of new employment. The situation for laborers with families was explained by Juan, a long-time resident of suburban North County: “For those with children, it is harder because they need more space, they have to pay more rent” (Fieldnotes 9-06-2010). The increased financial responsibility that comes with having children reduces the amount of time that a laborer can survive without finding work. The massive reduction in service sector employment during the economic downturn generated a secondary push factor for migration decisions. Under better economic circumstances, laborers could weather the downturn in the construction industry by taking a job in the lower end of the service economy, but today even these types of jobs are scarce (Toscano 2010b).

The final push factor for many laborers in the SDMA is the ever-present threat of deportation. Since 2005, the United States Border Patrol has increased its surveillance and policing of day-labor spaces in the region (Chacon and Davis 2006; Theodore 2007). Laborers at sites throughout the region reported raids by Border Patrol agents one or two times per year. Interestingly, there is no apparent geographic focus in Border Patrol raids. The average number of raids reported by laborers was consistent at sites of all types throughout the region. There are significant differences in the relationship between local police agencies and the day labor, immigrant, and minority communities between municipalities however (see chapter four). In addition to harassment by border patrol agents, residents in Escondido, California must regularly pass through police roadblocks that are
ostensibly intended to verify license and vehicle registration but often lead to verification of Hispanic residents’ citizenship status and deportation if a Hispanic resident cannot show proof of residency (Ibarra 2009). Deportations as a result of traffic stops have literally divided families in the region as mothers and fathers of American-born children are sent to Mexico while their children remain in the United States. Obviously, this stress is not limited to immigrant day laborers. It is shared by the entire immigrant community, and even Hispanic-Americans (Hiemstra 2010).

3.3.2 San Diego County Day Laborers in 2010

Despite the significant social and economic challenges that jornaleros faced in San Diego County, a substantial number remained by 2010. Even at the suburban-commercial-hubs and canyon-adjacent sites where the pressures for laborers to relocate or try an alternative means of employment-seeking are the strongest, there are still jornaleros looking for work. So who are the remaining laborers? At canyon adjacent sites there are two distinct groups of laborers. The first group is composed of undocumented migrants from Mexico who arrived recently, have no local networks, and are trying to establish themselves in the United States—though not necessarily in San Diego. For these recent migrants, day labor work in the San Diego area is a means of generating income to send to family in Mexico or to establish themselves in the United States. They are not necessarily tied to the San Diego region and may relocate to places where they believe there are better employment prospects (Personal Communications 01/2009 - 08/2011).
The second group of laborers still using canyon-adjacent sites is comprised of undocumented migrants from Central America. In San Diego, these migrants are most commonly from Guatemala and El Salvador. Many of the Central American laborers have resided in the United States for a year or more and have considered returning to their homes in Guatemala or El Salvador. Those who remain view the return trip through Mexico as substantially more dangerous than their current situation (Personal Communication 01/10/2011). There are geographic particularities even among sites categorized within the same type. For example, the population of jornaleros at a particular canyon-adjacent site congregates in two areas, roughly a quarter mile apart. One group is comprised of documented Latino residents. The second group is comprised of undocumented migrants from Guatemala and El Salvador. These men wait for work some 25 feet from the entrance to a major hotel, whose sign advertises the “5 Star” Spa that its guests can enjoy. When asked how he was managing with living in such marginal housing, Sixty-eight year old Marcos motioned toward the “5-Star” sign and replied: “what do I need five stars for? Every night I sleep under five-thousand stars” (Fieldnotes 01/10/2011). When evidenced in the face of such glaring material inequality, Marcos’ positive attitude is particularly impressive.

The laborers who remain at suburban-commercial-hub sites tend to be much longer tenured in the United States than the jornaleros at canyon-adjacent sites. Many have been in the country for a decade or more, and are well connected into local employment networks. Juan, a thirty-year resident of Vista, California, and
citizen of the United States for the last twenty years, returned from a vacation visiting his family in Mexico to find that the job he held for twenty-five years at a local lumber yard was no longer available. He explained: “They said they were sorry, but they couldn’t afford to keep me. If things get better they will give me my job back. If I still want it then!” (Personal Communication 9-06-2010). Fifty-five year old Juan chose to remain in the United States and look for work as a day laborer rather than return to Mexico. His decision was based on a long-term goal of bringing his family to the United States legally, which he believed was unlikely if he returned to Mexico for an extended period of time. Juan’s case is just one example of long-time and legal residents adapting to economic challenges by looking for work as day laborers.

Informal interviews with at least four ten day laborers who were long-term residents in the United States brought to light a more troubling reason for remaining in this country. Hispanic laborers who have been in the United States for five, ten, and up to thirty years repeatedly mentioned that they could not go home because of the crime problems there. The laborers I spoke with expressed fear that they or their loved ones could be kidnapped by local bandits operating on the misconception that the laborers have become wealthy during their time in the United States (Fieldnotes 09/2010 – 4/2011). The complex interactions between the regional economy of San Diego, border militarization, and the socio-economic circumstances of the transnational

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4 The number of interviewees is not specific due to the informal nature of the interviews, which were conducted with groups of laborers during multiple visits to each hiring site. Many of the conversations lasted over 45 minutes. During that time individual laborers entered and exited the conversation, so an exact count is not possible.
places where laborers are socially connected produce the socio-spatial landscape which each laborer must negotiate in order to maximize his chances for employment and/or survival.

The demographic composition of laborers at canyon adjacent and suburban commercial center sites demonstrates the complicated and somewhat contradictory nature of socio-economic processes under neoliberal capitalism. At canyon-adjacent sites, the total number of laborers has shrunk considerably; however, the underlying migration momentum from Mexico and Central America has not ceased completely during the downturn, so a small number of laborers still depend on the canyon-adjacent hiring sites in their daily search for employment (Cave 2011). The effects of the downturn at suburban commercial hub sites are even less uni-directional than at canyon adjacent sites. Many former day labor market participants have left the market looking for employment in other economic sectors or even resorted to migration to improve their family’s economic circumstances. At the same time, long-term residents of the neighborhoods near suburban commercial hubs, many of whom were previously employed in the formal sector, are increasingly turning to day labor work as a means of income generation. The racial/ethnic composition of new entrants to the day labor market corresponds quite closely with site type as the new entrants at suburban commercial hub sites are almost entirely Hispanic, while those at urban informal connected sites are more racially diverse.
3.5 Expanding Sites: Urban Informal-Connected Sites

Contrary to county-wide trends, the number of laborers seeking work at several urban informal connected sites has increased during the economic downturn. According to the manager of the Point Loma Home Depot, from 2008-2010, the number of day laborers congregating on the streets adjacent to the store increased at least fivefold from ten or less per day to fifty or more on average (Fieldnotes 6-3-2010) (See Figure 2-7). The racial demographics of the laborers at the site are also different when compared with the regional averages. While the vast majority of day laborers in the county are Hispanic, on a given day there may be as many as thirty white and African-American laborers at the Point Loma Home Depot hiring site (Fieldnotes 5/2010-7/2010). The increased size and diversity of the day labor population at the Point Loma Home Depot can be understood as effects of the economic downturn. As a direct result of decreased formal employment opportunities in construction, an ever-increasing number of unemployed men are trying their hand at day labor work. Some of these new entrants are formerly full-time employed construction workers who have resorted to seeking work as day laborers as a result of the downturn.

I met Wesley at the Point Loma hiring site in June of 2010. He is a fifty-eight year old African-American former marine who served in the Vietnam War. For the past ten years he has worked off-the-books as a handyman and general construction worker. During those ten years he never went to a day labor site to find work. Instead, he relied on social and professional networks to maintain consistent
employment informally for a decade. It was only in 2009 that he began looking for work at day labor sites, shortly after his girlfriend ended their two-year relationship. Wesley went on to explain that the breakup not only hurt him emotionally, but also professionally as well because he had spent the previous year refurbishing her home and yet she was unlikely to recommend his work as a result of their failed romance (Personal Communication 5/27/2010). The desire to relocate in search of better financial and social prospects is not lost on Wesley. During the weeks we talked at the hiring site, he was planning a move to Orlando, Florida. Wesley had never been to Orlando, and unlike most migrants, he wanted to move someplace where he knew no one. It was clear from our conversations that economic circumstances were not the primary basis for Wesley’s desire to move. However without children, family, a substantial number of close friends, or consistent employment in the area, Wesley felt that he had “no reason to stay” and needed a fresh start.

Mobility is a crucial aspect of the search for day labor employment, and is one way that laborers exercise their entrepreneurial ingenuity in the hiring process (Valenzuela 2001). Every morning, each laborer makes a decision regarding where he will wait for work, in hopes that employers will also be looking to hire laborers at the same site that day. The number of sites that a laborer could hypothetically access varies depending on his particular circumstances. Does the laborer own a car, bike or depend on public transit? Does he live in an area that is well served by public transit or is it relatively disconnected? Despite the wide range of sites that are potentially accessible to laborers, most choose to wait at the same site each day (Crotty 2007,
Turnovsky 2004, 2006). Some laborers, however, choose to look for work at multiple sites. Raymond is one such example.

Unlike most day laborers, Raymond looks for work at three different sites each week. On Mondays and Tuesdays he looks for work at the Point Loma Home Depot, Wednesdays and Thursdays he tries his luck at the Lemon Grove Home Depot, and on Fridays and Saturdays he travels twenty miles east to El Cajon to wait for work on Arnelle Ave (See Figure 2-7). Before the downturn, Raymond worked five days a week as a handyman, and only looked for work at the Arnelle Ave hiring site on his days off. He eventually lost his regular employment, and because he was paid off-the-books, was not eligible for unemployment benefits. Raymond’s site-hopping strategy is rare among laborers who more often prefer to wait for work in the same place where they know the other workers, local business employees, and the preferences of local authorities. Raymond chooses to look for work at multiple sites mainly to avoid boredom in his daily routine. His decision to look for work at multiple sites echoes his job-seeking behavior at the site, where he is one of the most aggressive job seekers. He was one of a handful of laborers who consistently positioned themselves on private property, in the Home Depot’s driveway, so they would have the best chance of reaching an employers’ car first. The manager of the Point Loma Home Depot identified this behavior as one of the most common problems he (and his company) had with day laborers. In fact, Raymond was excited to discover I was a “researcher” because he believed my presence would force the private security guard tasked with keeping laborers out of the Home Depot parking
lot to go easier on him. As a US citizen, he feels it is his right to look for work wherever and however he chooses. Through his aggressive job-seeking behavior at the site, and his site-hopping locational strategy, Raymond demonstrates agency in the employment process.

Raymond’s case also underscores the importance of public transit access for the establishment and maintenance of most urban informal connected sites in San Diego County. All of the sites that Raymond visits during his weekly routine are easily accessible from his home in downtown San Diego via the trolley (Fieldnotes 6-9-2011). The disproportionate increase in the size of trolley-accessible sites during the economic downturn demonstrates the importance of individual mobility for adapting to changing economic circumstances (Walker et al. 1992; Cresswell 2006; Joassart-Marcelli and Alberto 2006; Zenou 2008).

The importance of mobility for laborers is poignantly demonstrated by Jose. Jose is a fifty-five year old Hispanic-American who has lived in the United States legally for the past twenty-six years. He is married and has two adult children who live locally. For most of his life he worked as an off-the-books painter and roofer, but when we spoke in March of 2011, he had not found work in more than forty-five days and was surviving on less than one dollar per day which he earned from recycling cans and bottles he found around the hiring site. The long periods of unemployment put a strain on his familial relationships both emotionally and financially. He was evicted from the apartment he shared with his wife, after which his wife moved in with one of their adult children. Rather than further burden his
adult children, Jose chose to live in a canyon near the urban informal connected site where he looks for work. For Jose, proximity to public transit that he depends on to visit his family and a local food bank is of critical importance for his survival. Jose is not alone in the canyon either. Approximately one-third of the laborers who look for employment at the same site as Jose also live in the same canyon.

The economic challenges posed by the collapse of the construction industry are borne by laborers and their former employers alike. A number of the laborers at the Point Loma Home Depot and other urban informal connected sites throughout the region are contractors who not so long ago hired help from the sites where they now wait for work. Jesus is a contractor who runs a small construction business specializing in outdoor patio and fireplace construction. He was born in San Diego, has lived here his entire life, and is raising his children in the city. For more than ten years, Jesus hired temporary help at the same site where he now waits for work. He was hesitant to start waiting for work at the day labor site because he felt his time could be better spent networking to find projects for his business. Eventually Jesus decided to look for work at day labor sites due to his family’s increasingly desperate financial circumstances, which already forced his daughter to move because he could not afford to pay for both her dormitory at San Diego State University and the family’s mortgage. In spite of the challenges, Jesus has no plans to leave the area. San Diego is his family’s home (Personal Communication 11/10/2010).

Some new entrants to the day labor market have never worked in construction, but are looking for jobs as day laborers to help them survive until they can find new
full-time employment. Dwayne is one such laborer. Dwayne is an African-American man in his late thirties. After serving in the military, he worked as a truck driver for ten years, but was let go in 2008 when his company instituted cost-cutting measures to remain in business. I spoke with Dwayne the first day he arrived at the Point Loma Home Depot looking for work.

Author: How long have you been out of work?
Dwayne: I got laid off in January (2010). Been living off my savings since then, but it’s getting real low, you know? It’s getting real scary.
Author: So why did you decide to come look for work here?
Dwayne: Well, like I said, this guy I live with downtown who looks like you – white with curly hair and a beard – he told me this was a good place to find a job. I’ve been putting in applications all over town, so I figured I’d apply for some jobs driving for the companies over there (points to a street with several warehouse stores), and then check this place out while I’m over here.

Dwayne is from Arkansas originally and still has family there, but he does not believe that they could help him find a steady job or support him financially. His desire to stay in San Diego is based on his belief that despite limited social and economic support network in San Diego, his opportunities overall are better than in Arkansas with his extended family.

While the life histories of Wesley, Raymond, Jose, Jesus, and Dwayne are unique, their economic situations and conditions of employment are not. Each of these men is a new entrant to the day labor market, and began looking for work “on
the corner” due to the economic challenges he faced during the 2007-2010 recession (Personal Communication 06/22/2012). These new entrants are not evenly distributed across sites throughout the SDMA, but rather are focused at suburban-commercial-hub and urban-informal-connected sites. The greatest increase in site size during the downturn occurred at urban-informal-connected sites that are connected to a big box home improvement store and easily accessible by public transit (See Figure 2-5).

Finally, as a result of the economic downturn, the day laborers who remain at urban informal connected sites tend to have greater local resources at their disposal on average. Before the downturn, much of the current day-labor population was employed full time in construction or construction services. As a result, these men also tend to be higher skilled and have more work experience than previous market participants. They offer a wider range of services than did day laborers even two years ago. For example, laborers at one urban informal connected site offer hazardous waste disposal services, general hauling, and skilled construction trades such as framing and masonry. These laborers are quite proactive in making contact with potential employers at the site, and utilize marketing strategies not previously popular at day labor sites. Some laborers use their vehicles to help advertise their particular skills or services offered (Figure 3-8). These laborers are keenly aware of the importance of making their signs visible, and are protective of the parking spots that are most visible to Home Depot customers. These spots are considered so
valuable that the laborers use a second car to “hold the spot” when they (and their truck) are hired for a job.

Figure 3-5: Jornaleros at this site offer an expanded range of services

Many laborers also have business cards which they give to employers and potential employers. Some of the laborers I spoke with believed that having a business card was one way of distinguishing themselves from other men looking for work on the street. In some cases, markers of social capital like a business card can be used to overcome common employer prejudices based on race or even age. By “social capital,” I am referring to the understanding of social norms of behavior and interaction in particular environments. Social capital theories argue that economic success is largely the result of an individual’s access to networks that provide
economic opportunities, as well as socio-cultural experiences throughout the individual’s life that train him in the proper behavioral norms to be successful (Mayer 2003). The social and behavioral norms that are generally classified as positive for economic success are highly racialized and class-specific. Therefore, segregation at various scales can limit a person’s ability to develop the social capital required for success (David A. Reingold 2001; Neckerman and Torche 2007), even when opportunities are provided (Bourgois 2003). Understanding employers’ expectations or preferences in terms of dress, language and other norms of social interaction is an important part of laborers’ strategies for differentiating themselves in a highly competitive labor market.

Wesley: Well you know the Mexicans get all the work here.
Author: Really? So how do you get by?
Wesley: Well I do okay. See I dress nice, real clean. And I got the business cards too. Ain’t too many guys out here with cards, so that shows them that I’ve got myself together. Then if I get a job and they like the work, they can call me and I don’t have to mess around here on the street.

Wesley touches on the most important element in the business card: the laborer’s mobile phone number. Almost all the day laborers at the Point Loma Home Depot have a mobile phone, which they use to keep in contact with employers. Previous research has noted that for day laborers, mobile phone ownership reflects an investment in repeated and long-term employment (Crotty and Bosco 2008). This is still the case today; however, the importance of maintaining contact with recent employers is ever more critical considering the lack of employment opportunities
The increased importance of and accessibility of mobile phones has altered the nature of day labor spaces in a functional sense as well. Many day laborers use the hiring sites simply as pre-arranged meeting places for jobs that are arranged earlier on the phone. This allows the laborer and employer to meet their professional needs without providing the opposite party with additional or sensitive personal information such as a laborer’s housing status or an employers’ home address.

3.4 Social Impacts of the Economic Downturn

The economic downturn has caused multiple and complex changes to the day labor market in San Diego; the number of laborers has increased at some sites while decreasing at others, the hours of day labor activity have shifted as jobs become shorter and less frequent, and at some sites day laborers have increased their public exposure by advertising new services in highly visible locations. These changes have collectively altered the rhythms of the city (Allen 2003; Amin and Thrift 2002) and have produced new and markedly different kinds of day labor spaces. These sorts of changes are potentially problematic for most hiring sites because laborers’ right to occupy particular spaces is tenuous, and the locations of sites are the result of informal spatial ordering that maximizes laborers’ opportunities for employment, while reducing their visibility to the bystander public.

What the effect of these changes will be is yet to be determined, though the economic downturn has also led to higher level of tolerance for day labor activities in the region. Specifically, during the economic downturn, two new sites were established at big box home improvement stores in Northern San Diego County – an
area not generally considered to be urban. However, the sites are classified as urban-informal-connected sites because the locational logic and the relationship between the laborers at the new sites are the same as the urban-informal-connected sites found in more urban landscapes. The fact that some of the laborers who use these newly established sites are white generated a series of articles sympathetic to the plight of these non-stereotypical laborers, who were forced into day labor work by the recession (Berestein 2009). Nearly simultaneously reporters throughout the United States took notice and stories of the day laboring victims of the recession began popping up in newspapers across the country (Bazar 2009; Costa 2008; Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994; Esbenshade 2000; Varsanyi 2008a, 2008b). These articles fail to mention that there have always been white day laborers, and even more laborers who are citizens of the United States, most of whom are looking for temporary work due to economic processes beyond their control. What is most interesting, however, is that the severity of the economic downturn provided a social context within which laborers could be viewed with sympathy rather than the more typical fearful and anti-immigrant rhetoric that has characterized day labor discourses of the past 25 years (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1995, Esbenshade 2000, Varsanyi 2008). The media coverage has had a quieting effect on community tensions regarding day labor activity, and, in particular, has led to a decrease in police attention and harassment at San Diego North County hiring sites.5

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5 Border patrol officers have increased their presence in Northern San Diego County during the downturn. Therefore, the reduction in local police attention to day
3.5 Concluding Discussion

Day labor markets are an important, if under-studied, and under-theorized part of the United States economy. These markets serve a number of social, economic, and political purposes; though the role of particular sites varies depending on its socio-spatial position, which as I have demonstrated corresponds closely to the typology of day labor sites used in this analysis. Therefore, the typology presented in this dissertation can be used to better understand the role of day labor hiring sites in a variety of contexts. The “great recession” of 2008-2011 drastically altered day labor markets in San Diego County. It decreased total employment opportunities, reduced the average length of the remaining job opportunities, and generated massive changes in the demographic composition of hiring sites throughout the region. These changes are geographically distinct, however, and are the result of each hiring site’s situation within the urban environment. In this chapter, the stories of each laborer’s experiences during the downturn provide important details regarding the way that neoliberal reforms and policies implemented at the federal, state, or municipal scale produce spatialized effects at the scale of the day labor site. These jornaleros’ stories begin to illustrate the emotional geography of day labor – how each man’s experience of poverty and struggles during the downturn is intrinsically linked to his own life-history and the emotional networks he fights to maintain, as was the case for Jesus, or cast aside as was the case for Wesley. In this way, the effects of labor sites may also be due to increasing surveillance of the sites by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.
neoliberal policy at broader scales are made tangible and mapped on the sites and bodies of the men who are most affected.

The typology of sites presented provides a tool for better understanding how particular spaces and the people who inhabit them are relationally connected. It is also important to point out that the typology is flexible and should be adapted to local contexts when applied outside of the San Diego region. That flexibility is critical when we consider, for example, the situation of Jose, who lives in a canyon but looks for work at a site designated as an urban informal connected site. The basis for hiring site’s existence in that location is not due to a historical connection with immigrants living in the canyon, but rather its position within the public transit network and proximity to two major freeways. However, Jose’s decision to live in that particular canyon was driven by his own socio-spatial needs. He chose a location where he could easily access the site where he waits for work, and by extension the public transit network he uses to visit his family and access social services which he depends upon. It is Jose’s social rootedness in the community that limits his “options” for rent-free living spaces. Jose’s story also provides a poignant example of the way that hard-working, perilously-poor residents adapt to rapidly changing, mostly deteriorating economic circumstances. These economic circumstances are not of their own making, but are the result of structural economic processes that connect places and people across the globe to a degree never seen before in human history.
The locations of prototypical canyon-adjacent sites are based on a historical connection to the local agricultural industry, and the laborers who congregate at those sites have historically lacked local social networks due to the seasonal nature of the employment opportunities available. The nature of those employment opportunities shifted dramatically during the housing boom, during which time a considerable proportion of the productive agricultural land in Northern San Diego County was converted to housing, leading one expert on the region to state that “the biggest crop, of late, is housing” (Ford 2005, 209). The increase in employment availability did not result in an equivalent increase in the local social networks of laborers at canyon adjacent sites. Though demand for their labor obviously existed, neither affordable housing nor efficient public transit was part of suburban development. The laborers who sought work at canyon adjacent hiring sites are socially isolated (when they were not being actively marginalized by local anti-immigrant or anti-day labor activists) and, with few exceptions, fail to develop social networks in the neighborhoods they help to build and maintain (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994). As a result, the laborers at canyon adjacent sites remained relatively more connected to their homes in Mexico and Central America than the neighborhoods where they lived and worked.

The findings in this chapter show that, even when jobs are scarce, day labor markets act as a thin social safety net for laborers of a variety of backgrounds; those who were employed full time in the past and were laid off, some of whom qualify for unemployment benefits and others who do not. Space on the sidewalk is often shared
by military veterans, whose pension does not provide sufficient income to survive in San Diego, and small business owners who do not qualify for unemployment assistance due to their self-employment status. Newly arriving migrants in the United States congregate on street corners waiting for a chance to work, either to support the families they left behind in their home countries, or to build a new life in America. Day labor also supports migrants who have lived in the United States for many years, but for a variety of reasons, choose not to return to their native homes during difficult economic periods.

The diversity exhibited by laborers in the regional day labor market is impressive; however, the diversity that exists at the regional scale belies the ways in which social production of space organizes actors within the urban environment. Few, if any individual sites boast the level of population diversity that exists at the regional scale. The geo-spatial typology of day labor hiring sites acknowledges the importance of socio-spatial relations for structuring the urban environment, and provides a framework through which understanding of day labor markets and the needs of jornaleros who occupy particular markets can be immediately improved.

Existing approaches to day labor management fail to address the needs of jornaleros in a geographically sensitive manner. As a result, attempts to control day labor activities in San Diego County by local governments, non-profit organizations, and political-community groups are limited in their effectiveness. In the following chapter I examine the various approaches to day labor management used in San
Diego County before examining the motivations for stakeholder interventions into local day labor markets.
Chapter 4

Day Labor Management in the San Diego Metro Area:
Comparing Approaches and Effectiveness

4.1 Introduction

Day labor has become a common feature of the contemporary neoliberal economy, which feeds on flexible low-wage contingent labor, especially under the current crisis (Theodore 2007). Yet, as the previous chapters demonstrated, the effects neoliberal policy are highly localized, hiring sites are unevenly distributed in the urban landscape, and the demographic composition of laborers varies between sites as well. This results in particular challenges for local agencies (including municipalities or neighborhood associations) where such activities are concentrated. In this chapter, I focus on local agencies’ responses and the linkages between particular responses to day labor and neoliberal urban governance.

There are nineteen municipalities, twenty-eight census designated places, and many more neighborhoods in the San Diego Metropolitan Area (SDMA). Each area is unique for a variety of reasons. The unique character of each place results in a range of perspectives on day-labor activity and a corresponding diversity of strategies for managing day-labor activity. Over the past twenty years in the SDMA, there are examples of city governments and community groups employing each of the three most common approaches to day labor management previously mentioned. Some have attempted to formalize day labors space, others have tried to annihilate
them and others have left day-labor spaces formally unmanaged (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994; Crotty 2007). In this chapter, I provide an overview of recent attempts by local government and community members to influence or control day-labor activities. I then evaluate each attempt to control day labor activities according to two criteria: how successful was the attempt in altering existing patterns in day labor activity (in the short term and the long-term), and what resources were used in the management effort. The examples selected for this overview are a targeted sample drawn from both field observations and archival research dating back to the early 1990’s. Each of the cases discussed in the chapter highlights a particular approach to day labor management and the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy. I situate these attempts at day-labor management in the context of neoliberal urban governance. The ideological pillars of neoliberal urban governance play a role in both the expansion of day labor activities and the policing of day labor at the urban scale. I conclude the chapter by arguing that, due to the position that day labor as an industry occupies within neoliberal ideology, municipal governments are unlikely to try and manage day-labor activity directly until faced with a crisis of legitimacy.

4.2 Background

4.2.1 Neoliberal Urban Governance and Day Labor

Day labor has grown as a phenomenon largely as a result of global economic restructuring under neoliberalism, from the late 1980’s until today. Neoliberalism refers to a collective set of social and economic policies, the primary directive of
which is to “extend market discipline, competition, and commodification throughout all sectors of society” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 349). Neoliberal ideology is extended in a variety of ways; in some cases through direct policy actions by government agencies, non-governmental organizations. Deregulation and the systematic attacks on labor protections by state and federal governments have been particularly important to the growth of day labor in the United States. Under the neoliberal regime, economic insecurity has increased in virtually all sectors of employment (Harvey 2005). Taken as a whole, these policies have increased informal work across the globe while simultaneously increasing migration rates and establishing new migration streams throughout the globe, as workers utilize their own mobility to maximize their economic opportunities (Valenzuela Jr. 2003a; Sassen 2000, 1998).

Though many neoliberal economic policies are instituted at the federal or state level, their various effects are most acutely felt at the urban scale. These policies have restructured urban environments and altered primary directives of urban governance. David Harvey described this shift in focus as a movement from city management to urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989). Within this framework, cities are in constant competition with one another for new investment, and the primary task of neoliberal urban governments is to create the most attractive landscape for business possible. Three ideological directives guide the creation of the neoliberal urban landscape. First is the creation and maintenance of a pro-business climate, with the goal of promoting economic growth. Under this growth
imperative, governments may eliminate any bureaucratic impediments for new investment; they may lower or eliminate business taxes, eliminate bothersome environmental regulations, or even use public funds to subsidize private sector projects. Another aspect of the pro-business climate is making flexible and cheap labor available (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005; Theodore 2007). Local governments accomplish this in a number of ways. They can fight unionization of local employees, including city workers. Local governments also may oppose living wage ordinances within their jurisdiction; they may also allow day labor to operate informally, or establish a worker’s center – both of which maintain a low-cost, contingent workforce for local businesses to hire as needed (Fine 2005, 2006).

The second ideological pillar of neoliberal urban governance is to shift responsibility for social welfare from the government onto “the community.” Arguments in support of shifting responsibility to the community are organized around two dominant themes: individual/community empowerment and efficiency (Herbert 2005, 2006; Staeheli 2008). Adherents to the empowerment perspective argue that this change is politically empowering for individual citizens and communities and that communities can and should pull themselves up by their bootstraps and take care of their own. The efficiency argument is based on the idea that local communities know their specific needs and can, therefore, provide for those needs more efficiently than could a government agency. These two arguments

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6 The empowerment perspective is also used by anti-neoliberal activists who argue that the “community” is the most effective locale for resistance to the further entrenchment of neoliberal ideology and implementation of growth-first, socially unjust policies (Chatterton 2002; Gibson-Graham 2006; Leitner et al. 2007).
are tied together by the ideological notion that local control is inherently more
democratic and, therefore, more just (Purcell 2006; 2008). Unfortunately, these
ideological arguments do not hold up in practice due in large part to their inattention
to geography. As Purcell (2006, 2008) demonstrates, increased localization does not
necessarily lead to more democratic or just outcomes. In practice, the shift of
responsibility from the state to the “community” has led to increased social and
economic inequality. Neither of these arguments address the already-existing spatial
variations in capabilities (Sen 1999a, 1999b) or structural inequalities inherent to the
democratic process (Purcell 2006; Young 2000). Therefore, when responsibilities are
shifted from government to the community, the communities that need the most
assistance often have the least capacity to provide it for themselves (Kodras 1997;
Kodras et al. 1997; Herbert 2005; Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005; Joassart-Marcelli,
Musso, and Wolch 2005).

The third ideological directive of neoliberal urban governance is to increase
control of social behavior. These controls happen in various ways; however, for the
purposes of this chapter, the increased regulation of acceptable public space
activities is particularly relevant. In the neoliberal era, local governments have
created new laws and adapted existing ones to eliminate particular public space
activities that are viewed as deviant or impediments to consumptive activities that
are central to the growth agenda. These types of controls are best exemplified by the

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7 Ruth Gilmore’s research on the growth of private-prisons in the United States, tied to
increasingly severe sentencing laws for non-violent crimes, as well as the highly racialized policing of
these crimes is particularly noteworthy (2000; 2008).
increase in anti-homelessness legislation (Amster 2003; Mitchell 2003) but also include legislation aimed at reducing the presence of youth in public spaces such as daytime curfews or banning skateboarding (Venkatesh, Kassimir, and Social Science Research Council (U.S.). Collaborative Research Network on Youth and Globalization. 2007). Similar exclusionary logics apply to the working poor who are often relegated to the urban margins by the lack of inclusionary and affordable housing policies (Elliott and Krivo 1991; Neuwirth 2005; Squires and Kubrin 2005). The necessity of these restrictions on individual freedom is based on the supposed danger that the individuals engaged in the activities pose to the general public. This construction of consent through fear is a pervasive element of neoliberal governance, the logic of which simultaneously validates existing social controls and demands they be extended (Harvey 2005). The social control agenda is also part of the pro-business agenda; the presence of supposedly deviant people or activities is viewed as a threat to commerce, and therefore must be prevented or relocated to spaces where their intimidating presence on shoppers is minimized (Dear and Wolch 1987; Mitchell 2003; Zukin 1995).

In a seemingly contradictory fashion, neoliberal policies drive the expansion of informal work arrangements like day labor but then are tasked with controlling labor to maintain a visual landscape that is “clean” enough for consumptive activities. The policies that increase informalization are often enacted at the national or even supra-national scale, and produce effects which vary across space and lead to vastly different outcomes at the local scale. The growth of suburban informal day-
labor markets highlights one of the many internal contradictions of neoliberal governance (Smith 1996). Day laborers are a low-cost (if often exploited) labor force. As such, day laborers are attractive to business interests and, from their perspective, are a positive element of the economic landscape. The locations of day labor hiring sites are not chosen at random. As was discussed in Chapter Two, sites are located in neighborhoods with statistically higher levels of employment in the industries for which they are commonly hired. Therefore, despite the informal nature of the hiring process, it is clear that day laborers are an integral part of the local economy.

The presence of day labor sites in an area lowers the cost of doing business for industries that depend on low-skilled labor. But day laborers must physically occupy public spaces in their daily search for work, which creates externalities and challenges the local government’s control of space. Neoliberal narratives define poor, minority, and immigrant bodies as dangerous others, whose desperate situation is the result of personal failures and vices, certainly not related to structural failures of neoliberal capitalism. In the narrative of "broken windows" theory, for example, poor people are defined as unbalanced, addicted, and potentially dangerous individuals whose presence indicates the decline of a neighborhood and a danger to its residents (Wilson and Kelling 1982). This narrative justifies increasingly harsh forms of policing used to cleanse public spaces of the homeless, minorities, and sometimes day laborers (Mitchell 1997, 2003; Herbert and Beckett 2010a). The neoliberal narrative of “illegality” further marginalizes and racializes laborer’s
position – as the negative attributes associated with “illegal” immigration are transposed onto the laborers (Varsanyi 2008a, 2008b; Hiemstra 2010). Chacon and Davis argue that the disconnect between anti-immigrant policies at the US-Mexico Border, and economic policies known to promote migration between the two countries creates an intentional contradiction that allows for greater exploitation of immigrant labor in the United States (2006). As state agencies fail to implement immigration reforms at the federal level, the challenge of negotiating the social and economic changes that arise from increased migration to particular cities or neighborhoods is left to local agencies. For communities where active day labor sites are viewed as a threat or problem, the narrative of illegality places local governments in a difficult position. If they provide any assistance they risk being perceived as part of the “problem.” Instead, government agencies are expected to remove (or at best ignore) these unsightly elements from the urban landscape. Therefore, the decision of how to manage day labor in a city forces local government officials to balance their desire to promote economic growth with the social control demands of some of their constituents – who are also likely part of the local business community.

4.2.2 NIMBY-ism and Day Labor Conflict

Controlling public spaces is one of the foundations for government authority (Allen 2003). In democratically governed space, authority is a resource given by the voting public to particular agents specifically to control space (Herbert 1997). When agents of authority fail to control space in a manner that the voting public views as
acceptable, it calls into question the power of the existing institutions, and creates a crisis of legitimacy for the sitting government. Therefore, the existence of day-labor sites in a municipality does not in-and-of-itself challenge the government’s authority. Only when members of the government, or, in democratically governed space, their constituents, view the use of space as problematic does an informal hiring site challenge government authority. As it was previously discussed, there are three general options available to governments for day labor management: formalization of space, annihilation of space, or the most common approach, leaving day labor activities formally unmanaged (Crotty and Bosco 2008). When forced into action by a crisis of legitimacy, local governments must choose to formalize or annihilate space for day laborers, and their choice is often indicative of the way that community membership is defined by their constituents. In this case, community membership refers to locational and identity characteristics that residents use to define social norms that social acceptance is based.

The establishment of a worker’s center is the most common method of formalizing space for day labor congregation and hiring. The designation of a particular space allows for day labor activities to be centralized. Workers' centers can be successful in addressing the chaotic appearance, traffic congestion, littering and public urination, which together are some of the most common community complaints regarding informal day labor sites. The centers can also serve a greater purpose than simply reducing the chaotic appearance and traffic problems common to informal day labor sites. They often provide basic social services, legal counsel,
English classes, and some protection against workplace abuse. Day labor researchers and labor advocates argue that designating space for worker congregation, with a formal structure for job distribution, access to restroom facilities, and other amenities is the most comprehensive solution currently available for day labor management (Camou 2002; Valenzuela Jr. 2006b).

Establishing a workers’ center is tricky business politically. Opposition to workers’ centers is typically centered on one of two issues. First, anti-immigrant groups argue that day laborers are “illegal” immigrants and any support of them, public or private, is a crime. Their argument presupposes that all of the workers who use a center are illegal immigrants; this is, in fact, not the case. The demographic and legal status of labor populations in the United States varies regionally, between hiring sites in a given metropolitan area, and even depending on the time of day at a specific site (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006; Crotty and Bosco 2008). Thanks to the popular understanding of day laborer as synonymous with illegal immigrant, this argument still holds political sway (Varsanyi 2008a). Second, similar to homeless shelters and other social service providers, workers’ centers often encounter resistance from Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) groups when looking for a potential location (Takahashi 1997a; Dear 1992; Takahashi 1997b; Tempalski et al. 2007). Members of oppositional groups may or may not be in favor of establishing a workers’ center somewhere, but unquestionably do not want one to be located near their residences – in their metaphorical “backyard” (Takahashi 1997a).
Resistance to siting decisions for human service providers can be understood as part of the broken windows theory of urban policing. According to this neoliberal narrative, tolerance of disorder of any sort – from a single broken window, to aggressive panhandling, to graffiti, indicates that a neighborhood does not care about maintaining its spaces and, thus, invites or induces more and increasingly serious crimes (Wilson and Kelling 1982). Broken windows theory provides a supposedly rational basis for local residents’ opposition to locating human service providers in their neighborhood. Clients of human services are widely stigmatized, considered lazy, deviant or dangerous, depending on their particular service needs. The visible presence of individuals who are poor, sick, or suffering from mental health issues within a landscape is understood to be an indicator of neighborhood decline.

Following this theory, the poor, homeless and service dependent are broken windows in human form. The remedy for which is removal, to banish the poor from public spaces (Herbert and Beckett 2010).

When local authorities want to remove day laborers from their jurisdiction, they opt for the second day labor management strategy: annihilation of space (Mitchell 2003). Annihilation of space refers to a number of actions that local authorities take to alter space in ways that make it more difficult for laborers to engage in the behaviors required to seek work in a particular area. Space can also be altered through legal means, by criminalizing behaviors viewed as inappropriate or problematic. This approach is characteristic of neoliberal governments and has been used against a wide range of deviant others, including day laborers (Mitchell 2003;
Several municipalities have attempted to pass laws that would criminalize day labor within their jurisdiction; however, most of these have been found unconstitutional upon appeal (Seeking employment is a form of free speech protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution).

However, annihilation of space need not be accomplished through traditional legal methods. The mere physical presence of local police or other law-enforcement agencies can also alter space. In San Diego County, the most common method of discouraging day labor congregation is increased police presence and focused ticketing for the petty crimes which are often a necessity of actually seeking work as a day laborer: jaywalking, loitering, obstructing traffic, public urination, etc (Crotty 2007; Crotty and Bosco 2008; Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994).

In addition, community members occasionally act independently of government agencies to alter day labor spaces. Anti-immigrant groups tend to be the most active in this regard, and typically take a more direct approach in their day labor management strategies than local governments. Groups like the San Diego Minutemen and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) often organize protests at day labor hiring sites. These protests serve to intimidate day laborers, and simultaneously discourage potential employers from hiring laborers from that location. Anti-immigrant protests are often met at the hiring site by immigrants’ rights activists who organize in support of the day laborers. The presence of these pro-immigrant activists does serve to protect laborers from acts of

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8 In San Diego County, the United States Border Patrol, and County Sheriffs are the main non-local police agencies that commonly visit day labor sites.
vigilante violence; however the spectacle of political groups from both sides of the immigration debate facing off is effective in eliminating employment activities at the site during the protest (Chacon and Davis 2006).

Finally, annihilation of space can be accomplished through architectural and urban design (Ellin 1997; Mitchell 2003). The most common means of adapting spaces to be less friendly for day labor activities are the removal of benches so laborers cannot sit down, removal of shade trees, and the addition of fences and bushes that restrict pedestrian access to particular spaces or restrict path of travel between private and public spaces.

Efforts to annihilate spaces for day labor are not universally popular politically. Immigrant’s and workers’ rights groups, as well as groups concerned with social justice more generally, oppose directed enforcement of existing laws to discourage day labor congregation. Thus, there is considerable political pressure against local governments whether they attempt to formalize or annihilate spaces for day labor in their jurisdiction. As a result, most local governments elect to do nothing and leave day labor formally unmanaged. The informal mechanisms that guide the vast majority of day-labor activity are the focus of chapter six. In this chapter, I focus on pro-active government responses, which can be categorized into two general groups: those that try to permanently remove, or banish, laborers from an area, and those that formalize space for day labor by establishing a designated place for laborers to congregate. In San Diego County, there are examples of municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and political groups engaged in
each of the day labor management strategies. In the following sections, I draw from a number of case studies to illustrate and compare these different strategies.

Removing day laborers from informal, curb-side hiring sites is the goal of both banishment and formalization strategies. Therefore, the effectiveness of particular attempts to manage day labor can be inferred by whether or not activity persisted at informal hiring sites after the government or community organizations took action.

4.3 If you build it, will they come? Evaluating the Effectiveness of Workers’ Centers in the SDMA

Four formal day labor centers were operating in the San Diego Metropolitan Area during the period of this research project: the Pacific Beach Employment Center in San Diego, The City of Carlsbad Employment Center, Confia en Ti in Escondido, and the Iglesia San Pedro (St. Peters Catholic Community) in Fallbrook. Most contemporary day-labor scholars advocate the creation of workers centers as a means of protecting laborers and managing day-labor markets (Theodore 2007; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006); this collective support is largely uncritical of the differences in workers centers in terms of organizational and philosophical principles that generate vastly different outcomes. It must be noted that workers’ centers improve working conditions for laborers – regardless of the organizational or philosophical perspective guiding the daily operations of a particular center (Camou 2002; Theodore 2003; Theodore, Valenzuela, and Melendez 2006; Toma and Esbenshade 2001; Valenzuela Jr. 2000; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). The differences
in outcomes to which I refer relate to the spatial organization of day labor activity. In particular, I am concerned with the effect of a formal center on informal day labor activity nearby. Does it draw laborers of the street into the formally designated spaces for day labor activity? How does the organizational structure or philosophical principles followed at a formal center impact the center’s ability to incentivize jornaleros to seek work in a more structured and safer environment?

Michelle Camou’s research examining formal day labor hiring sites in California is the most thorough review of workers’ centers focused specifically on day labor activities (2002). She found that there were two basic models of formal hiring sites, the rights-protective model and the workers’ collective or union shop model. The goals of workers’ centers of both types are quite similar. They try to facilitate employment at a living wage, eliminate workers’ rights violations in the day labor market, and support jornaleros through education and social service provision. Differences between sites are the result of how each center prioritizes its goals and the methods they use to achieve them. According to Camou, the rights-protective model, also sometimes called the social-service provision model, focuses “on personal choice and immigrants’ rights to maintain systems of street-based work solicitation” (2002, 7). These types of workers’ centers provide space for laborers to wait for work if they so desire, but they do not engage in or support any actions that limit laborers’ freedom to seek work on street sidewalks and corners. Rights-protective hiring sites’ primary strategy for drawing laborers in from the street is social service provision. These centers offer food assistance, English language
classes, tool-provision and other amenities that many jornaleros want or need (Camou 2002; Fine 2006). Formal hiring sites that adhere to the union-shop model, also known as the labor-centralization model, focus “on full-incorporation of day laborers into day labor centers and disruption of street systems” (Camou 2002, 7, emphasis added). The position of labor-centralization workers’ centers is that meaningful labor protections cannot be maintained while there is a dual-market (streets and formal centers) for day labor. These workers’ centers use a number of tactics to discourage jornaleros from seeking work in the street, and generally support the establishment of ordinances that would criminalize employment-solicitation in public spaces (Camou 2002). Under this organizational structure, day laborers must register at the center, which serves as an intermediary between workers and employers. Union-shop workers’ centers also emphasize employment over the provision of any other services.

The categories laid out by Camou are a generalized types meant to identify the fundamental ideological differences among day-labor advocates. Rights-protective centers are more individual, while the union shop emphasizes collective organization. Most centers in the United States, and all of the formal hiring sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area, fall somewhere between the ideological poles Camou identified. Of the formal hiring sites in the San Diego Metropolitan Area, the workers’ center at St Peter’s Catholic Cathedral is the closest, ideologically, to a worker’s collective model. The remaining three formal hiring sites operate under the rights-protective, or social-service model. This is an important distinction in an
examination of formal hiring sites in the San Diego region because there is no evidence that any of the four workers’ centers support ordinances that limit jornaleros rights to seek employment in public spaces. The differences between workers’ centers in the region, and their effectiveness in managing day-labor activities are not the result of ideology. Instead, they are the result of bureaucratic regulations and geographic situation. The circumstances that led to each workers’ center being established are unique, as is the geographic situation that each center inhabits. Therefore the differences in effectiveness must be understood within the appropriate geographic and temporal context. In the following sections, I briefly examine the socio-spatial history of each center and compare each center’s effectiveness in terms of the goals of the workers’ center, and in terms of eliminating or relocating day-labor activity in public spaces.

4.3.1 Public-Private Partnership in Pacific Beach

The Pacific Beach (PB) Employment Center began operation in 1997 when the San Diego City Council voted to approve the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an employment center located on an 80 by 200 foot piece of city-owned property on the northeast corner of Mission Bay Drive and Damon Ave. According to Waldo Lopez, the Director of the PB Employment Center, the chaotic appearance of an informal hiring site at the corner of Mission Bay Drive and Grand Ave provided the impetus for establishing the workers’ center.

So, this center was created in 1997, because, uh, all the people, the workers stay over here in Pacific Beach you know, with no
control, with no organization. You seen alcohol, peeing on the streets. You know, it’s a lot of things, the people (non-laborers) start to call the city. And after they decided to create the center, it was given to us (SER – Jobs for Progress) for ruling (personal Interview with Waldo Lopez, 04/01/2006)

From this description it appears that from the City of San Diego’s perspective, the primary objective of the center was to reduce or eliminate the chaotic appearance of day labor activity in Pacific Beach. According the Waldo Lopez, the hiring hall was not intended to reduce the visibility of day labor activity at informal hiring sites in any other neighborhoods within San Diego city limits. The city established a partnership with the non-profit organization SER – Jobs for Progress. The agreement required the city to provide $70,000 dollars per year toward operational costs and established an initial 5-year lease for the center at an annual cost of $1. SER – Jobs for progress would staff the center, manage its operation, and provide services to the laborers with whatever funds remained or could be raised independent of city contributions.

In Pacific Beach, formalizing space for day labor activity was partially successful. The new hiring site did eliminate informal hiring activity at the original “problem” corner. The approved location is located less than half a mile from the original informal site, and in some ways, is actually a better space for day labor activity. The San Diego City Council selected an unquestionably marginal space for the workers’ center. Wedged between a drainage culvert, a freeway on-ramp, and a highway overpass, the PB Employment Center and the activity that takes place there
are rendered less-visible to the general public, thereby “cleansing” the more heavily-trafficked and commercially-critical intersection of Mission Bay Drive and Garnett Ave of supposedly deviant behavior. The space for the new center is a more functional space for day labor activity; it is equally accessible to employers but provides greater protection from traffic for employment negotiations. The block adjacent to the worker’s center also has a number of concrete posts sunk into the sidewalk that jornaleros can comfortably lean against while they wait. Overall the space has more amenities than did the precious location. As a result, the center was completely effective in accomplishing the primary goals from the City of San Diego’s perspective. Laborers relocated, by choice, from a highly visible space to a less-visible space. The fact that relocating to the new location actually provided an economic advantage, relative to the original informal hiring site, is a critical point that I will return to in chapters six and seven.

Measured from a broader perspective, the center was less effective. It did not entirely eliminate informal day labor activity in Pacific Beach. In fact, shortly after the PB Employment Center opened, an informal hiring site took shape along the same street as the formal center. The reasons for the existence of this dual day-labor market are complex,⁹ and tied to the geographic concentration of subsidized housing in downtown San Diego and the job allocation system used at the workers center, but the continued presence of the informal hiring site directly adjacent to the formal

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⁹ See Crotty and Bosco 2008 for an in-depth, ethnographic examination of the effects of racial geographies on the operation of the Pacific Beach Employment Center.
center suggests that this effort was not entirely successful in “managing” day-labor activity.

4.3.2 Hyper-visible Formalization in Carlsbad, California

The City of Carlsbad is located in northwest San Diego County. In some ways it is a classic Southern California suburban town. It was incorporated in 1952, during the post-World War Two housing boom, and was initially home to almost exclusively White families living in single-family homes. The city was and, even today, is, wealthier and less-diverse than regional averages. Like many suburban municipalities in Southern California, and throughout the United States, Carlsbad has experienced significant change over the past 40 years. In four decades, the population increased by nearly 300 percent from 35,490 in 1980 to 105,328 in 2010 (www.sandag.org). The demographic composition of the city is changing as well. Hispanic residents make up 13 percent of the local population, while Asians, who currently represent 7 percent of residents, are the fastest-growing minority group.

There are two active informal day-labor hiring sites in the city. Both of the sites have existed in the same location for at least thirty years (Fieldnotes 2007-2011). They were established to provide short-term labor for home construction, landscaping, and seasonal agricultural labor for the farms that have not yet been converted to commercial or residential land uses. Laborers’ role in the local community was not always valued however. In 1990, a community conflict “boiled over,” which prompted the city government to take direct action to try and manage
day labor activity. The conflict centered on parents’ concerns that an informal day labor site was located too close to an elementary school. These parents feared that their children would be asked for money, verbally harassed, or that they could potentially become victims of more serious crimes (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994). In response to constituents' concerns, the Carlsbad city council voted unanimously to approve funding for a city-sponsored hiring site. As was the case in San Diego, administration and operation of the Carlsbad employment center is contracted to SER Jobs for Progress. The annual cost to operate the center is difficult to ascertain directly from the city budget, as funding for the employment center is included in the $400,000 2010-2011 budget for the Housing and Neighborhood Services Department. For the purposes of this analysis, I use $70,000 as the annual contribution since the arrangement between Carlsbad and SER – Jobs for Progress is identical to the partnership established between the City of San Diego and SER – Jobs for Progress for the same services.

The approved location for the Carlsbad hiring hall is on city property, just under three miles from the informal site where the conflict was based, but less-than 1000 feet from the city’s central police station. This location is far from residential and commercial interests, and can be easily monitored by local authorities without dedicating or diverting resources to the site. It has not been successful in eliminating informal day labor activity in the city. The two informal sites that were the original target of residents’ ire are still active today. Laborers at both informal sites said that the local police rarely bother them. In 2009, the City of Carlsbad placed
informational signs about the formal workers center at each of the informal sites, in hopes of drawing employers to the city-sponsored site. In this way, the city formally encourages particular behaviors from employers but does not go so far as to legislate and police those behaviors. The city of Carlsbad’s use of informational signs provides an example of attempting to control space without legal mandate.

Comparing the Pacific Beach and Carlsbad employment centers provides insights regarding each community’s perspective on day labor. In Pacific Beach, day labor activity is something to be hidden. It should be pushed to the margins of community space. For the San Diego city council, day labor is bad for business; it is ugly, but not necessarily dangerous enough to police directly. In contrast, Carlsbad opted to formalize a highly visible space in the community for day labor activity. This could be interpreted in either a positive or negative light. On the one hand, the site’s position near the heart of government activity in Carlsbad could indicate residents’ acknowledgement of day laborers’ importance in the community. On the other hand, the position near the heart of government activity could indicate residents’ fear of day laborers and preference that they be contained in a space that is far from homes and easily surveilled. Regardless of the interpretation, the city of Carlsbad employed a very different management strategy, geographically speaking, than did the City of San Diego.

The hiring centers established in Carlsbad and Pacific Beach are nearly identical in terms of their administrative operations and the government’s goals for relocating jornaleros. The two cities even contracted the same non-profit organization to run the
centers. And despite these similarities, the Pacific Beach center was more effective than the Carlsbad center due to the difference in geographic situation of the spaces each city chose to formalize – San Diego identified a marginal urban space for day labor activity, while Carlsbad formalized a space for day labor at the heart of a complex of government buildings. Both of these centers’ effectiveness is limited by their common policy that requires all day laborers to register and demonstrate their legal right to work in the United States before they can use the center’s services. Undocumented immigrants make up a considerable portion of the regional day labor population. Any attempt to manage day labor activity though formalization is destined to fail if it only serves documented residents. Confia en Ti and St. Peter’s Catholic Community provide examples of formal hiring centers that do not differentiate amongst the people to whom they provide services based on documentation status.

4.3.3 “A Hand up, not a Hand Out”: Social Service Provision, Neoliberal-Style

Confia en Ti is a formal workers’ center located in Escondido, California. Located in the northeastern part of the San Diego Metropolitan Area, Escondido is home to nearly 150,000 residents, an increasing proportion of which are Hispanic. From 2000 to 2010 the number of Hispanic residents increased 49 percent, from 51,693 to 70,326 residents. During the same time period, the number of White residents decreased by 16 percent, from 69,305 to 58,142. The rapidly changing demographics in Escondido have generated considerable unrest among residents and
city government officials. The government approved several new policies that target immigrants and minorities and seek to annihilate space. None of the policies implemented in Escondido targeted day labor activity directly\(^\text{10}\), but they have altered the nature of space for immigrants and minorities (Garrick 2007, 2011). During this time period, anti-immigrant sentiment in the area manifested in a number of ways; anti-immigrant activists began harassing day laborers, and larger numbers of residents voiced concerns about day labor activity to the city and local police agencies (Seymour 2008). It was in this climate, with community members on-edge, that *Confia en Ti* was founded.

*Confia en Ti*, which means “Trust in yourself,” is but one of the social service programs offered by Interfaith Community Services, a large non-profit agency based in Northern San Diego County. The workers’ center was established in 2002. According to previous ethnographic research on the center, *Confia en Ti*, was created as an answer to the visibility of the day labor population. Many community partners including the local police department came together to form a worker center which would stop workers from waiting on the street, give them a safe place to contract work, and resolve the community complaints of issues such as garbage and jay walking (Seymour 2008, emphasis added).

One critical difference between *Confia en Ti* and the employment centers in Pacific Beach and Carlsbad is the government’s role in funding the centers. *Confia en Ti* receives no funding from government sources whatsoever. Operating costs for

\(^{10}\) The city government considered passing a ban on employment solicitation in public space in 2007, but elected not to pursue that policy (Garrick 2007).
the center are provided by grants from philanthropic groups and smaller private donations. The center is free to serve anyone it chooses, regardless of documentation status, thanks to the absence of government funding for the center. *Confia en Ti*’s dependence on outside funding directs, and potentially restricts, its goals for social service provision. The center is currently funded in large part by a grant from The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF), a group established to promote health and wellness education and disease prevention programs in the state. As a result, much of the services and educational programs provided at *Confia en Ti* are health-related (Personal Communication 7/2010, 5/2012).

*Confia en Ti* is located as ideally as is possible for a workers’ center. The space identified for the center is on Quince Street - the same street where laborers have waited for short-term work since the bracero program (Seymour 2008). Because *Confia en Ti* is not dependent on government for funding, it is free to assist all jornaleros, regardless of documentation status. Eliminating that barrier to use should improve its effectiveness in terms of day-labor management. Yet, despite the fact that using the center would not require laborers to relocate more than a block, *Confia en Ti* struggles to draw laborers into the center for employment assistance or the medical and educational services it provides. Many jornaleros take advantage of the free breakfast provided each day, but a relatively small percentage of jornaleros who eat breakfast at the center remain there to wait for work. There are a number of reasons for this. The first is practical. The room where the laborers wait for work is rather small, no more than 1000 square feet. The space gets crowded when there are
more than twenty jornaleros inside. The combined population of the two informal
hiring sites on Quince Street is consistently over 50, so moving all the jornaleros
indoors is logistically not an option at this time. All of the laborers could register
with Confia en Ti and take advantage of their medical and nutritional assistance
however, but few choose to do so. Some laborers dislike the formal structure for job
distribution set by the center. Jill Seymour, the former program manager at Confia en
Ti, describes the job distribution process:

Workers come to the center starting at 5:30 a.m. and write their
name on a list, along with their identification number. Every
registered worker gets an identification number the first day they
come in, so that the organization can keep track of services they
receive. Employment primarily goes through a lottery system, not a
first-come, first-served basis. At 6:00 a.m. the Field Manager puts the
corresponding number of bingo balls to workers inside of a bingo
cage. He writes the numbers down on the original list. For example, if
Antonio signed up as number 16, and number 16 comes out first from
the bingo cage, then he is the first person on the list to go out to work.
The Field Manager repeats this process until all of the numbers are
gone and everyone has a new number. The first two workers on the
list used to be given the job of sign holder. The worker center used to
have two people stand outside everyday, advertising to potential
employers about worker center employment services. This is no
longer being done because the executive board felt that during this
heightened time of immigration discourse and conflict it would draw
unwanted attention to the organization. Now, the first two workers on
the list must help to clean the main room and bathroom of Hiring
Hope, since the center is supposed to be maintained through the
collaborative effort of the workers, and there are no custodial services (2008, 61).

Morning lotteries to establish hiring order are quite common at formal workers’ centers. Waldo Lopez, the former director of the Pacific Beach Employment Center, explained the rationale as being entirely practical. “Many of these people are homeless. If we give the numbers in the order of when they get here, many will just sleep here” (Personal Interview 4/2/2006).

*Confía en Ti* structures the hiring process to an even greater degree than was the case at the Pacific Beach Employment Center. At *Confía en Ti*, if a job is offered and your name is next on the list, you are *required* to accept that job, so long as the compensation is at least minimum wage. At the Pacific Beach employment center, if the laborer with the next number up decided he did not want a particular job, for any reason, the job was offered to the next man on the list. The first laborer who passed on the job did not lose his position on the hiring list. At both centers, there are exceptions to the numbered lottery system for job distribution, but they are not entirely relevant for this discussion.\textsuperscript{11} Many laborers are convinced that they will be disadvantaged by the structured system and prefer the more competitive employment environment that the informal hiring site provides.

\textsuperscript{11} For in-depth discussion of the hiring process at the PB Employment Center see Crotty (2007). For Confía en Ti, see Seymour (2008)
Figure 4-1: North Quince Street Informal Day Labor Space, areas with consistent congregations of jornaleros are marked in light blue. Note Confia en Ti at the Northeast corner of West Washington Ave and North Quince Street.

My observations from 2008 to 2010 show that Confia en Ti was relatively unsuccessful, when evaluated strictly in terms of effectiveness in removing day laborers from the streets. For a variety of reasons, the center has not convinced or sufficiently incentivized jornaleros to leave (very) nearby informal hiring sites. There are circumstances, under which, jornaleros are more inclined to congregate at the hiring center. In 2005, at the height of anti-immigrant sentiment in Escondido, jornaleros were often subjected to harassment by anti-immigrant activists and even...
were victims of vigilante violence on a number of occasions. At that time, as many as fifty laborers chose to wait for work at Confia en Ti, rather than take their chances on Quince Street. The number of “clients” at Confia en Ti also jumps rather dramatically when the Border Patrol conducts raids of the informal hiring site on Quince Street (Personal Communication 7/21/2010). In both cases, jornaleros chose to use the center because it provides a degree of protection from public spaces that are made dangerous by the actions of area residents or policing agencies. These situations illustrate the short-term effectiveness of annihilation of space in altering jornaleros’ behaviors, but an aggressively hostile public sphere can hardly be considered a socially-just precondition for effective day-labor formalization efforts.

It would be unfair to evaluate Confia en Ti strictly based on its effectiveness in managing day labor activity. It is, after all, a workers center that follows the social-service provision model. The center is quite effective in achieving its health-related goals, and in particular, is highly successful in its efforts to maintain adequate nutrition among the jornaleros who look for work at the center and on Quince St as well. The small number of jornaleros on Quince Street who do not take advantage of the free breakfasts and bagged lunches available at the center choose to do so for a combination of machismo and nationalist pride (See Chapter 6). Examining the goals of the center as a whole, it is clear that Confia en Ti is more effective as a social-service provider than as a tool for day labor management.

Confia en Ti, as part of the umbrella non-profit organization under which it operates, fully embraces the neoliberal perspective on social service provision.
Market-based logic and dialogue are part of the daily operation of the center. This is perhaps most clear in the terminology and criteria used to document the center’s successes. Services provided are called “deliverables” and the laborers who use the center are “clients.” One of the main motivations for the employees of Confia en Ti to increase laborers’ use of the center is to justify continued operation of the site. In order to maintain funding and access future funding sources, they must be able to document the demand for their services among laborers, as well as other community members. Therein lies one of the most significant challenges for Confia en Ti. It is, first and foremost, a day labor workers’ center. Their connection to day labor, in a city where anti-immigrant sentiment runs high, led site managers to reduce their visible connection to day labor activities, and also prevents them from advertising the valuable health and nutritional services that they could, and would like to, provide to a wider cross-section of the population.

4.3.4 Faith-Based Formalization in Fallbrook

Fallbrook, California, is a small town on the far-Northern edge of San Diego metropolitan area. The city is known more for its agricultural landscape and output than any other feature. The formal site located in this community was established in 2006 when anti-immigrant protesters regularly visited an informal day labor space at the intersection of East Alvarado Way and Stagecoach Lane. These protests motivated the nearby Catholic Church to provide a space for the laborers to wait for work each day. This site was originally affiliated with the National Day Labor
Organizing Network (NDLON), but has since rescinded that affiliation. The formal hiring space established at St. Peter’s Catholic Community is the most successful example of the formalization of space being employed as a means of managing day labor activity in the region. There are a number of lessons to be taken from this particular case study.

Fallbrook is a low-density housing area, located less than four miles from the northern border of San Diego County. There is agricultural employment in the area, but that is inconsistent. The area is protected from sprawl-based development by distance, topography, and zoning. For those reasons there is not a great deal of employment for day laborers in the area. Hiring sites can only survive if the laborers who use them find sufficient work to continue seeking employment in that manner. In Fallbrook, it is unlikely there was ever sufficient day labor work to support a second hiring site. The second challenge for establishing another hiring site in Fallbrook is the city’s position in local and regional transportation networks. As opposed to some of the other cities on the rural-urban fringe of the San Diego Metropolitan Area, where highways connect directly through the center of the historic downtown, the dominant traffic patterns in the area do not pass through Fallbrook’s historic town center. Without a centralized location for congregation, laborers ‘striking out on their own’ would be unlikely to draw the attention of employers unaccustomed to looking for jornaleros in a new location.

St Peter’s Catholic Community is located on Stagecoach Lane, roughly half a mile south of the intersection of East Alvarado Rd and Stagecoach Lane. In fact,
proximity to the previous informal day labor space is one of the reasons that the Fallbrook formal center was “successful.” The new formal center was not located in a marginal space, far from employers’ paths of travel. Many employers would have driven past St. Peter’s on the way and from hiring labor at the intersection of East Alvarado and Stagecoach Lane. However, the Confia en Ti employment center discussed in the previous section is similarly well located and has not achieved equal success in managing day labor activities even just beyond the workers’ center’s property. Location alone does not guarantee success in managing day labor activity. Day labor spaces are complex and produced through socio-spatial relationships that are constantly changing. The composition of laborers at a particular site may change due to economic circumstances, as I demonstrated in chapter three. Other area stakeholders may move in and out of the area, altering relationships between jornaleros and other stakeholders, as well as their relationships with the places that they seek work. I examine these issues in detail in chapter 6; the lesson for local agencies interested in day labor issues is that these socio-spatial relationships are an integral part of the production of day labor space, and must be addressed for day labor policies to be effective. This poses a considerable challenge for day labor management, but not one that is insurmountable.

4.4 Annihilation of Space

When city governments are pushed to taking direct action to manage day-labor activity, many opt to try and remove day-labor activity from their jurisdiction
altogether. To accomplish that goal, these cities enact policies that attempt to annihilate space (Herbert and Beckett 2010b; Mitchell 2003). The general idea is to keep laborers (or any other group deemed as undesirable) out of particular spaces by altering the nature of those spaces. This can be accomplished through legislation, architectural design, or force.

4.4.1 Annihilation of Space by Law

Over the past 30 years city governments throughout the United States have enacted ordinances banning day labor activity. Time and again these types of ordinances have been overturned in the courts because seeking employment is a form of free speech protected under the First Amendment (Espana 2003). In 2006, HR4437, also known as “The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act,” placed immigration reform in the national spotlight and mobilized major protests and demonstrations throughout the United States. The most widely contested aspects of the legislation dealt with providing various forms of assistance to undocumented immigrants in the country. The bill would have criminalized providing aid that might help anyone known to be an undocumented immigrant stay in the United States. Ostensibly meant to increase penalties for human smuggling, the legislation was so vague that depending on how “aid” was defined, social workers, priests, and other people involved in immigrant support could be charged with aiding and abetting a fugitive. The law also would have increased the penalty for renting to an undocumented immigrant to a felony, with a
minimum federal sentence of 3 years in prison (Sensenbrenner 2005). The reaction to the bill was massive and included a pro-immigrant march on April 9, 2006, which was the largest recorded public rally in San Diego history (Berestein 4/15/2007:B1). The bill passed the United States House of Representatives, but failed to pass the Senate. The failure of bill at the federal level intensified immigration tensions at the municipal scale; constituents demanded action from their local government leaders that demonstrated their community’s perspective on “illegal” immigration. During this time there was a sharp increase in the number of anti-immigrant political groups throughout the country, and by February 2007, there were twenty-one groups classified as hate groups by the Intelligence Project (Southern Poverty Law Center 2008). These groups’ activities and political mobilization affected the political climate in the region, leading to a range of responses from area government officials. The mayor of National City (in southern San Diego county) declared his town to be a “sanctuary city” for immigrants; while in sharp contrast, the Vista city council enacted new legislation that required day labor employers to register with the city, and allowed local police to directly regulate day-labor activity through ticketing and code enforcement. The Escondido city council approved an ordinance that would fine landlords who rented to undocumented immigrants. The case of the ordinance in Escondido is beyond the immediate scope of this project because it deals with housing rather than day labor activity directly. However, the intent of anti-day labor legislation passed in Vista and the housing ordinance passed in Escondido was
nearly identical. In both cases local governments sought to banish undocumented immigrants from their jurisdiction.

The case in Vista, however, is also noteworthy because it represents a fundamental shift in the way that local governments attempt to annihilate space by law. Rather than trying to ban day-labor activity directly, the city passed Ordinance No. 2006-8\(^{12}\), which established a regulatory system for day-labor hiring. The ordinance established legal requirements that employers would have to meet before hiring a day laborer. Specifically, all employers have to obtain a registration certificate from the city, which must be displayed on the employer’s vehicle at the time of hiring. Directly after hiring a laborer, the employer must present him with a term sheet that lists:

“the name, address and telephone number of the employer or his or her agent, signature of the person making the offer, name of the day laborer, type of work to be performed, hourly rate of pay, number or range of hours to be worked, work site address, and whether the day laborer will be responsible for his or her own transportation from the work site” (Calderon, Hernandez and Serrano v. City of Vista 2006).

Though in some ways this formalized arrangement could protect laborers from exploitation and some of the other abuses that are unfortunately common to their line of work, even city councilman Bob Campbell was quoted as saying “it would be

disingenuous to say this is strictly to protect the workers” (Tenbroeck and Marshall 2006). Critics of the ordinance argued that the city was “trying to do through the back door what they can’t do through the front” (Tenbroeck 2006b). The primary intent of the ordinance was to remove laborers from the streets by reducing employers’ incentive to hire them within the city.

Commentary in the local paper regarding the ordinance focused on the behavior of laborers and whether or not their presence at the suburban commercial hub was a public nuisance or would hurt business. The opinions of local business owners and employees ranged from the owner of a discount store who said, “They can be there, I don’t care” to an owner of a specialty cigar shop who said “it’s the most dangerous shopping center I’ve ever seen” (Tenbroeck 2006a). A few comments singled out problematic behaviors by laborers, public urination being the most common. The bulk of negative comments about the laborers, however, argued that the laborers inadvertently intimidated customers simply by virtue of their presence (Tenbroeck 2006a). None of the local residents’ comments focused on the behaviors that the ordinance actually addressed, which dealt entirely with the behaviors of employers.

The effectiveness of the ordinance, in terms of removing day laborers from the streets of Vista, has been limited at best. Four years after the ordinance was enacted, the formalization process is all but ignored by employers and laborers within the city limits. There are exactly as many hiring sites and though the number of laborers at suburban-commercial-hub and canyon adjacent sites in the city site declined, the pattern matches changes at sites of similar types throughout the county during the
downturn. It would be difficult to attribute any change in the size of sites to the legislation. So what factors led to the limited effectiveness of the ordinance? The city’s enforcement strategy provides insights regarding the failure of the ordinance to remove day labor from the area, but also strengthens the argument that the city government never intended to eliminate day labor from the city. Their intention was simply to relocate day labor activities to more marginal spaces in the community.

The city planned to begin enforcement of the ordinance at the largest site in Vista, which had generated increasing complaints from residents from 2005-2006. During the same time, the number of laborers using the site doubled, and the political climate surrounding immigration intensified. City Attorney Darold Pieper described the city’s enforcement strategy as “active enforcement early in the process, with an eventual scaling down to complaint-based enforcement” (Tenbroeck and Marshall 2006).

The nature of day labor hiring provides one of the most significant obstacles for enforcement of the ordinance. Even during periods of high overall employment, there are often long intervals between job hires over the course of the day. During low periods of employment, these hiring breaks can last several hours. Because the ordinance only allows the Vista police to cite employers for failing to register with the city, the police must be present at the site at the exact moment when an employer arrives. Therefore, to ensure that the ordinance is effectively enforced, the city would have to station a police officer or code compliance officer at the hiring site from dawn to dusk, or approximately twelve hours per day.
The pay scale for San Diego Sheriff’s deputies ranges from $21/hr to $36/hour (http://www.joinsdsheriff.net/paychart_le.html). It is unlikely that higher ranking police officers would be assigned to this task, so the low end of the pay scale provides a reasonable hourly rate from which to calculate the total cost to the city. It would cost $252 per day to station one rookie police officer or a code compliance officer at a hiring site. Therefore, the cost to the city for bare-bones enforcement of the new day-labor regulation would be $1764 per week, and $7,056 per month.

There are three active day labor sites within the city limits. It would stand to reason that if the police heavily enforced the ordinance at the central location, employers would simply hire their help from unmonitored sites, and the size of those sites would increase in relatively short order. Therefore, to ensure uniform enforcement of the ordinance for one month would require three officers, at a minimum, at a total cost to the government of nearly $28,000. In reality, the cost would be even higher due to administration costs, and other expenses such as vehicle fuel and maintenance. This is a massive designation of resources for a municipal government to dedicate to code enforcement. In the years since the regulation passed, the city of Vista proved unwilling to dedicate the resources necessary to effectively regulate day-labor activities in the public spaces of Vista, and thereby eliminate day laborers from the local landscape.

Throughout the process of passing the day labor employment ordinance, city government officials consistently alluded to the possibility of creating a formal workers center at “another location” in the community. No proposals for a potential
formal hiring site location were ever discussed during city council meetings however (Vista City Council 6/13/2006; Tenbroeck 8/8/2006).

4.4.2 The Annihilation of Space by Force:

**Police Force as Day-Labor Management Tool**

In the absence of legislation that specifically regulates day-labor activity (employment solicitation in public spaces), city governments occasionally resort to more direct methods of controlling space. When governments seek to remove day laborers completely, they delegate that responsibility to the local police force. The primary purpose of the police force in democratic societies is to be “effective agents of territoriality, to be able to control social action by controlling area” (Herbert 1997, 10). Incomplete territoriality, or incomplete control of space, translates into incomplete power. When territorial control is threatened, the police are state-authorized distributors of violence and use various tools, one of which is the implicit threat of violence, to achieve the socio-spatial control that legitimizes their existence (Herbert 1997). To be clear, local police are a significant stakeholder in the everyday production of day-labor spaces (See Chapter 6). The difference in this case is that when local government faces a crisis of legitimacy as a result of constituent concerns about day-labor activity, police officers’ relationship with day-labor spaces changes. Under “normal” circumstances, police engage with laborers sparingly – only visiting hiring sites when activity is causing traffic problems or other disturbances that threaten public safety. From this perspective, the police are managing activity in
space, but rather than trying to remove it entirely, they use the tools at their disposal to direct activity into certain spaces and establish place-based behavioral norms that they deem acceptable (Crotty 2007; Herbert 1997).

In early 2006, I conducted participant observation at a large, urban-informal-connected hiring site in El Cajon: a municipality in eastern part of the San Diego Metropolitan Area. The site, located on Arnelle Ave, between Jackson Street and Marshall Blvd, was selected for observation due to its size, which at the time ranged between fifty and eighty laborers each day, making it one of the largest hiring sites in the region. During my field research, the El Cajon Police Department (ECPD) began a directed effort to remove day-labor activity from the area. The department’s concentrated action on Arnelle Ave began in early February, 2006, and lasted one month. In mid-march the department decreased its actions and attention on the site, though the hiring site continued to receive higher levels of police attention than was the previous norm until 2008 (Fieldnotes 2006-2010).

The police action against the day laborers at the Arnelle Ave hiring site in El Cajon provides an example of annihilation of space by force. Annihilation of space for day labor activities required actions against areas beyond the actual day-labor space. For example, the first action made by the El Cajon Police Department to eliminate day-labor activity along Arnelle Ave was to remove a homeless encampment in the area. The residents of this particular encampment were homeless individuals who sought work at the site. According to one officer, the residents of that particular campsite drank heavily, used drugs, and were responsible for most of
the “serious” problems attributed to day laborers in the area. The officers viewed these homeless campers as the most dangerous members of the day labor population and, therefore, most deserving of immediate police attention. The police removed camping equipment and campers’ belongings, arrested the residents of the camps (several of whom had outstanding warrants), and ordered the removal of bushes and other landscaping that had provided cover for the campsite. Elimination of safe residential spaces near the hiring site for the dangerous “others” made it increasingly difficult for those individuals to engage in day labor at the Arnelle hiring site. This action “cleansed” the total population of laborers using the site. Removing potentially dangerous and/or violent actors from the population of laborers who would receive increased attention from the police over the coming weeks reduced the chances for a violent encounter at the hiring site, a public space where bystanders could be put at risk.

Cleaning up campsites did not convince all of the former campsite residents to move out of El Cajon, or to stop seeking work along Arnelle. According to Officer Smith, a few “bad apples” returned to the site looking for work in the week after the campsite cleaning. Their return to the area clearly challenged the officers’ authority, and the bad apples were moved along much more quickly and harshly than were laborers with lesser or unknown criminal histories.
4.4.2.1 “Move along son” and other phrases that are intimidating, when spoken by a police officer: Spatial Control through Police Action

The second stage of the police effort was to use their presence, as well as focused enforcement of existing laws and regulations, to control the public and private spaces around Home Depot. During the height of the day labor action the El Cajon Police Department assigned six officers to the Arnelle Ave hiring site. Each day four patrol officers and two community police officers dedicated their entire shift to controlling day labor near the Home Depot. Those officers used every legal tool available to them to remove day laborers from Arnelle Ave. The legal tools available to the police department vary between public and private spaces. To improve their chances of employment or to avoid harassment day laborers move back and forth across the invisible bureaucratic line that divides public and private space. Officially speaking, the police are required to recognize the limits on their authority over private spaces. However, under special circumstances the police can circumvent these limits and extend the area under their control into the private realm.

4.4.2.2 Spatial Control of Private Property

The El Cajon Police Department’s occupation of the Arnelle Ave day labor space was based within the Home Depot parking lot. Patrol officers occupied the parking lot and took over the enforcement of parking lot regulations from the private security guards who are typically charged with controlling that space. Private security guards’ approaches to controlling space are limited by their diminished legal
authority compared with police officers. Private security guards’ actions are also
guided by different set of motivations. In particular, how their job performance is
evaluated. Private security guards are evaluated according to the satisfaction of the
client who hires them. For security guards who patrol areas with laborers, this means
that their performance is related quite closely to the number of customer complaints
that are filed regarding jornaleros, or the security guard’s treatment of jornaleros.
This typically results in a rather subjective enforcement of regulations. The El Cajon
Police Department was much more thorough in the regulation of parking lot use. To
control the private space in and around the Home Depot parking lot, officers
watched for men who parked their cars and seemed to be waiting around too long
without moving into the store to make a purchase. When a potential day laborer was
identified, the officers would approach the individual, usually remaining in their
police cruiser during their approach, ask for some form of identification, and then
would briefly question the individual. I never witnessed an interview in the Home
Depot parking lot after which the officers determined that their "suspect" was not
planning to seek day labor work (interviewees in other locations along Arnelle Ave
were occasionally convinced the officers that they were in the area for reasons other
than seeking employment). After establishing that an interviewee was at the Home
Depot to seek work, the officers would enforce Home Depot's parking lot regulations
and threaten to tow or impound the accused laborer's vehicle. The officers also ran
checks on the men's names as well as their vehicle's license plates. I did not observe
any incident in which the officers' checks turned up outstanding warrants for laborers
or problems with their vehicles. That is not to say none of the checks conducted by the ECPD were successful. I began my observation period about one week into the ECPD's anti-day labor effort. As one officer told me, "We rounded up most of the troublemakers in the first day or two" (Personal Communication 2/13/2006). In this case the officer was referring to several of the homeless individuals who returned to the day labor site after the police eliminated their campsite in the first stage of the effort to remove day laborers from Arnelle Ave.

4.4.2.3 Spatial Control of Public Spaces

In addition to their actions to control the Home Depot parking lot the El Cajon police officers worked to remove day laborers from public spaces along Arnelle Ave. The mere presence of police officers at the Home Depot and along Arnelle Ave was fairly successful in scaring away day laborers. The police presence was made hyper-visible by the continual movement of marked patrol vehicles in and out of parking lots as well as up and down Arnelle, Jackman, and Jackson St. The police maintained a constant presence in the Home Depot parking lot throughout the anti-day labor effort, but the officers switched positions and responsibilities throughout their shifts. Patrol and traffic officers almost never left their vehicles except to issue citations, while the community police officers moved up and down the street on foot. The continual movement of officers between positions and spaces of engagement with laborers gave the impression of even greater police surveillance than was actually in
place. Police presence was particularly effective for motivating undocumented laborers to “move along”.

4.4.2.4 “As Long as it Takes”: Controlling Space through Long-Term Occupation and Surveillance

The final stage of the anti-day labor effort was a continued long-term visible presence at the site. Officers working on the anti-day labor effort were clear from the first day of their effort that they; “would be here as long as it takes.” This did not mean, however, that there would be four officers stationed along Arnelle Ave for the foreseeable future. After four weeks of full occupation and action against day labor on Arnelle, the ECPD continued to keep a reduced but visible presence near the hiring site. Once the number of laborers congregating daily was sufficiently low, and the remaining laborers were stubborn and rights aware enough to remain at the site without violating any laws, the police department began to reduce its presence at the site. The police continued to patrol the site several times an hour for several weeks but did not maintain a continual presence at the Home Depot or along Arnelle Ave.

4.4.3 Effects of the El Cajon Police Department's Spatial-Annihilation Campaign

Through intimidating presence and total enforcement of the existing legal geography on Arnelle Ave, officers were able to minimize the presence of jornaleros and exert greater control over space where substantial day-labor activity took place. The actions undertaken by the El Cajon Police Department had several effects,
intended and otherwise. The biggest effect that the ECPD’s effort had was to relocate significant number of the jornaleros who sought work along Arnelle Ave. It also changed ways that laborers used space along Arnelle Ave and Jackson Rd. Before the police action, the highest concentration of day laborers was at the west end of Arnelle Ave near the Home Depot. In response to the police action, which focused on the Home Depot parking lot and adjacent public spaces, laborers adopted a new locational strategy that reduced their visibility to the general public by waiting in lower-traffic areas, farther from the Home Depot. So, the ECPD significantly reduced the total number of laborers using the Arnelle Ave hiring site; the unintended consequence of which was to make the remaining laborers hyper-visible in their new position adjacent to restaurants and other businesses with no connection to industries that hire day laborers. The police attention was also effective in reducing the number of employers who hired labor from the site. In April 2006, Juan, a laborer who lives in Lemon Grove, said that the number of days he found work dropped from four or five to one or two per week due to the increased police presence (Personal Communication 4/4/2006).

The police action significantly changed the landscape of anti-day labor hostility in the SDMA. The police were effective at making many day laborers uncomfortable waiting along Arnelle. That discomfort generated one of two responses from laborers. The majority of laborers who had been using the Arnelle site simply chose to seek work at another site, producing a significant increase in the number of laborers at the urban-informal-connected sites in Lemon Grove and on Fairmont
Ave, in the Mission Gorge neighborhood of San Diego. The few that remained were steadfast. This small group of men waited in the shadows of a furniture store, on the east side of Jackman St. They defended their right to seek work in whichever space they chose. Each of these men is a naturalized United States citizen and viewed his position as important to ensure that employers came back when the police stopped their day labor harassment. “If no one is here to work when the bosses come by, they will stop coming here. This is a good place for work, we have to stay here” (personal interview 6/14/2006). In this way, citizenship status played a significant role in the laborers’ ability to maintain control of space. The risk of deportation thanks to undesired interactions with El Cajon police officers was too great for undocumented jornaleros, and they moved to other sites to avoid the problem. Laborers “with papers” exercised greater control of space thanks to their protected legal status in the United States. They did not behave in ways that would draw additional attention to them because of their legal residency; they simply did not leave the day labor space due to police presence. The effects of the anti-day labor actions in El Cajon must be understood within their temporal context. In the short term, the police action had an immediate and significant impact on the number of laborers congregating near the Arnelle Ave Home Depot. However, the police were never able to completely eliminate day labor activities in the area, and in the long-run, the effects of their anti-day labor efforts waned with the department’s willingness to dedicate resources to the issue. With its best efforts, the ECPD was successful in reducing the number of
jornaleros in El Cajon, but the police were never able to eliminate day-labor activity at the Arnelle Ave hiring site.

A police department’s best effort does not come cheap. The actions taken by the ECPD required a substantial investment of department resources. The ECPD assigned six officers to police the quarter-mile hiring site, twelve hours a day, for a month. After the initial aggressive enforcement period, the department decreased, but did not completely eliminate, its presence on the block. Police continued to patrol the street more heavily than it was patrolled before the anti-day labor action, and stationed a community police officer on the block during the busiest hiring hours. The average salary of the police officers in El Cajon is $44,000 per year, which works out to slightly more than $21 per hour. The cost to station a single officer at the hiring site was roughly $169 for an eight-hour shift, and $252 for the full 12 hours per day that the hiring site was active (6 A.M. to 6 P.M.). For the first month the ECPD had six officers patrolling the street, for 12 hours per day, at an estimated cost of $10,584 per week. At that rate, the initial stage of the police action cost $42,336 in officers’ salary alone. This reflects a considerable allocation of financial resources for a city with limited tax revenue and a legitimate problem with crime. In chapter Five, I examine the motivation for this particular police action in greater detail. That case study shows that a locational conflict regarding a proposed new Home Depot location in Eastern El Cajon motivated the police action.

4.5 Conclusion
One of the primary arguments against the establishment of a formal workers’ center is the cost to the city. However, as the preceding case studies showed, the cost of formalization is substantially lower than annihilation in the long run. Therefore the critical question is not whether or not cities can afford to sponsor formal hiring sites, but what locational, bureaucratic, and organizational structures must be in place for a formal hiring site to be “effective”?

When effective day-labor management is defined exclusively based on a strategy’s success in relocating laborers, it is clear that the results of all the existing approaches are inconsistent at best. Formalization strategies are clearly more effective tools for day-labor management than annihilation strategies. The value of formal workers centers cannot be measured exclusively in spatial terms. The work they do for the laborers who choose to take advantage of their services is important, and they are effective in providing services when laborers allow them the opportunity. This was the case in Pacific Beach and at Confia en Ti. The Pacific Beach Employment Center, which was funded in part by the City of San Diego, has since closed due to cutbacks in social service funding. It is included in this analysis because it provides a cautionary tale regarding public funding for workers centers during the era of neoliberal urban governance. Furthermore, examining the socio-geographic position and organizational structure of the Pacific Beach Employment Center demonstrates the relationship between local government and day laborers in Pacific Beach, and highlights the necessity of spatial awareness in day labor management.
At Confía en Ti, the long-term challenge is two-fold. As a non-profit organization, the center is dependent on continued funding from private sources. The center is currently funded by a grant from the California Wellness Foundation, and the requirements of the grant partly control the operation and services that the center provides. In the future, the funding source could be different, and could require the center to change the services it provides. If the goals of the center fall out of favor in the world of public-private charity, funding from outside sources could also dry up completely. This is important from a day-labor management perspective, as well as an administrative perspective. The operation of day labor sites is often the result of years of habitual activity in particular places. Changing the rhythms of the city is difficult business and requires substantial stability in the location to which a city or community-group hopes laborers will relocate.

Neoliberal ideology is pervasive in day-labor management, from policing strategies to social service provision. In each case examined, local governments were faced with crises of varying size and significance that challenged their ability to control space. In each case, governments or local community groups altered their existing approach to day-labor management in order to address the concerns or complaints of their constituents. The concept of community holds great power within neoliberal ideology, but it is often used in contradictory ways. This contradiction is highlighted best by anti-neoliberal activists’ affection for the concept, and belief that community establishes an ideological space for resistance to neoliberalism (Chatterton 2002; Gibson-Graham 2006; Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2007). In
reality, the work that community does produces outcomes that are mixed at best when evaluated in terms of social justice. For example, in Escondido a number of community-based and governmental organizations including the Employment Development Department, the Mexican Consulate, Migrant Education, the Latino Business Association, Interfaith Community Services and others, instigated and negotiated the change in management strategy (Personal Communication 5/2012). These groups’ concern for the safety of day-laborers in an overtly hostile, anti-immigrant public sphere motivated them to establish a center where jornaleros, members of the local community could look for work in relative peace and safety. The community, in this case, protected day laborers from other members of the community. Herein lies the most serious problem with the notion of community as it is used in contemporary American society. Community is supposed to reflect unity; the shared perspectives regarding political, social, and ethical obligations that members have for one another, typically in a fairly localized context. However, thanks to changes in mobility and urban form, community is increasingly disconnected from place. The case study in Chapter Five examines this issue in greater detail, and provides further support for the argument that neoliberal governments only take actions against day labor activities when faced with a crisis of legitimacy.
Chapter 5

Building a Place-Frame: Day Labor and NIMBY Opposition to the “Neighborhood Home Improvement Store”

5.1 Introduction

The conflicts that sometimes occur surrounding day-labor activities are often described as “community conflicts” (Toma and Esbenshade 2001). In most instances however, the term community is used in a vague manner that leaves important questions unanswered or unaddressed. Who is part of a community? What are the criteria for membership? How does membership relate to one’s place of work or residence? How are the practices of community distinct from practices of citizenship? The most significant challenge as it relates to day-labor conflicts is that the term “community” rarely is used in a way that includes the laborers themselves. Conflicts are framed as jornaleros against “the community”. When conflicts over rights to space are framed in this manner, it poses a significant challenge for day-labor advocates. Why should local government or NGO’s invest resources to support a group that is understood to be “outsiders” or “others”? Early day labor research conducted surveys at day labor sites to provide a demographic profile of jornaleros, but also to provide an empirical measure of jornaleros’ residential status and engagement in community-building activities such as attending church, raising children locally, or participating in recreational sports (Valenzuela Jr. 2003). This research, however, rarely took into account the larger political and economic
context, as well as the local community conditions, under which day laborers interact with others and are potentially drawn into conflict.

The anti-day-labor actions of the El Cajon Police Department (ECPD), highlighted in Chapter Four, marked a departure from their long-standing tolerance for day-labor activity on Arnelle Ave. Though the police action was unsuccessful in eliminating day-labor activity completely, it had negative consequences for all of the jornaleros at the site. Some laborers received tickets for minor infractions; jornaleros that remained at the site lost employment opportunities, and all of the jornaleros who used the space were subjected to hyper-scrutiny, intimidation and harassment. Shifts in established daily practice, like the ECPD’s anti-day-labor action, are rare. They are even less common without a significant change in the size of a site or jornaleros’ behavior, as was the case on Arnelle Ave. In this chapter, I examine the basis for the police action: a community conflict related to a siting decision for a new Home Depot location, nearly four miles east of the existing store on Arnelle Ave.

My goal in this chapter is to contribute to an ever-growing body of research that highlights the contradictions and injustices endemic to the neoliberal project. By situating day labor within the tenets of neoliberal ideology, I demonstrate the uneasy relationship between day labor and municipal governments. In particular, I support the argument made in Chapter Four, namely that local governments only take direct action against day labor activities during moments of crisis generated within the neoliberal system. Lack of direct engagement with day-labor activities sustains a local low-cost work force, so long as they occupy marginal socio-spatial positions in
American cities. Furthermore, the social position day laborers occupy in their municipality has significant implications for their inclusion in the decision-making processes that affect them. *Day laborers’ position of marginal acceptance is only attacked when their presence threatens local elites’ ability to attract capital to the area*, as the case study in El Cajon shows. The detailed examination of the opposition to a new Home Depot location clearly illustrates the motivation for the actions the City of El Cajon have taken to eliminate day-labor activity from Arnelle Ave (See Chapter 4). The opposition movement was effective in arguing that the new location was a threat to the community’s physical and emotional health as a result of pollution that the store would create; many of those who were opposed to the siting decision also argued that the fact that the store was a Home Depot added an even greater threat to the community, because day laborers would congregate near the near the store. This case study highlights the importance of, and potentially exclusionary nature of, community membership in disputes over control of space. The locational conflict in El Cajon also demonstrates the ethical complications of community-based resistance to the neoliberal project.

5.2 Who Disagrees with Whom? Unpacking “Community” Conflict in Day Labor Research

Whether community is developed *in place* is a central concern for urban-social geographers. Empirical studies show that under the right circumstances, shared experiences in particular neighborhoods produce a place-based sense of community
(Duneier 1999; Ford 2005; Rossiter 2010). The key factors for place-based community development are permanence, stability, and immobility (Knox 1995, 26). If we accept these factors as the cornerstones of distinctive, locally-based social systems, it is easy to see how day laborers would struggle for inclusion. Day labor is an impermanent mode of economic activity, which, by definition, requires mobility for success. According to Margaret Stacey, these unique place-based systems of community-building take between fifty and eighty years to develop – assuming most of the residents are born in the area (1969). By this standard, very few places in San Diego County would qualify as authentic communities. But in a period of rapid economic and social change, fifty to eighty years is, in all likelihood, an unreasonable timeline for analysis of community development. A sense of community is strengthened and produced through shared experiences in particular social institutions: the church, school, pub, or playground. Historically these institutions had a distinctive local focus, as individual mobility, particularly in urban areas, was rather limited compared to contemporary residents of US cities. As individual mobility increased, the focus of these institutions shifted from place-based community development to issue or identity-based communities that exist as a network of individuals connected across residential neighborhoods by shared interest or identity (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008; Martin 2003; Massey 2004a; Mitchell 2005; Staeheli 2008). Combined with innovations in communication technologies, increased mobility led contemporary geographers to reconceptualize the function and socio-spatial dynamics of community.
Furthermore, the production of “local” spaces changed substantially after World War II with the application of Fordist manufacturing principles to residential home construction. Indeed, the suburban landscape is one defined by homogeneity, where neighborhood identities are based on home buyers’ expectations, rather than produced through shared experiences with their neighbors (Ford 2005). That is to say, the definition of community in the American suburb is based on representations of space, rather than representational space (Lefebvre 1991). Therefore, modern neighborhood identity is tied to commercial, historical, and potentially mythological discourses (Ford 2005; Meinig 1979b). Over time however, these symbolic definitions of local community are often challenged through social organization, activism, and even discord. In these processes, neighborhoods can redefine themselves through contentious politics (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008), and produce what Deborah Martin calls place-based collective action frames, or “place-frames” (2003).

Place frames “highlight the potential relationship between activism based on an idea of neighborhood and the material experiences of that place” (Martin 2003, 733). There are three discursive elements in each place-frame: the motivational element, the diagnostic element, and the prognosis (Martin 2003, 736). The motivational element defines the community; it provides a descriptive foundation that fosters a sense of place-based community through references to common life-experiences or sights in the area. The diagnostic element identifies a problem in the area and its cause; the diagnostic frame suggests the target for neighborhood activism. The
prognosis presents a solution to the problem, which likely requires collective action or agreement. So place frames are produced by local residents, political representatives and activists, business people, and other residents, who collectively establish the terminology and associated identity values that they believe are, or would like to see become, characteristics of the neighborhood and its residents. The place-based boundaries of community are defined and re-defined through negotiation, disagreement, and even conflict (Martin 2003). These tactics are also used by Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) organizations in their efforts to prevent certain types of businesses or facilities from locating in their neighborhoods. The following sections highlight the way that the discursive connection between Home Depot Inc and day labor led to increased resistance to siting decisions for the company in El Cajon, and other cities throughout Southern California as well.

5.2.1 Home Depot and Day Labor: a mostly symbiotic relationship

Considering that laborers are most commonly hired for construction and landscaping jobs, it is no surprise that roughly 70% of all day labor hiring sites are “connected” to stores which serve the industries in which day laborers are most often hired (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). Home Depot Inc. has gained national attention as the company most commonly connected to day labor sites (Greenhouse 2005). This publicity has proved troublesome for the company, which is facing stronger opposition from groups in areas where they want to open a new store. Community or neighborhood-based resistance is common in land use decisions of various types.
Big-box stores, like Home Depot, often face NIMBY resistance when they attempt to open a new location (Daniels and Lapping 1996; Sites 2007; Halebsky 2009). The popular connection between day labor and the Home Depot brand name specifically discursively connects the approval process for new Home Depot locations to the wider discourse regarding day labor management in Southern California (Morris 2007).

5.3 Research Methods and Background

The city of El Cajon, California is located in the eastern part of the San Diego Metropolitan Area (SDMA). Centered within the now twice-correctly named “Big Box Valley” (named for the box-like shape of the valley, and now home to many big-box retailers, car dealerships and other large-footprint retail establishments) it is home to nearly 100,000 residents. The population of El Cajon has lower income and is slightly less racially diverse than the population of San Diego.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Percent White</th>
<th>Percent Hispanic</th>
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<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
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<td>El Cajon</td>
<td>51873</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
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Table 5-1: Demographic Comparison of San Diego, CA and El Cajon, CA

The city exhibits a distinct physical and social geography. The urban center of El Cajon sits on the floor of the big box valley, and is surrounded by lower-density neighborhoods. The socio-spatial geography of El Cajon mirrors that of most

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13 Data from San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)

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developed areas in the SDMA, in which income increases and racial diversity decreases with elevation (Ford 2005). More simply, the whitest and wealthiest residents of El Cajon live on the valley edges, literally and figuratively looking down on the city center.

The city of El Cajon has experienced substantial growth in the past 30 years, as have areas located even farther east in San Diego County. For much of this time, the store on Arnelle Ave, in El Cajon was the eastern-most Home Depot location on Interstate 8, making it the most convenient store for contractors working in El Cajon, or anywhere east of El Cajon in the county. The store’s location and reputation as a favorite among contractors made it an attractive site for day laborers looking for work, and until early 2006, it was connected to one of the largest informal hiring sites in the metropolitan area (Fieldnotes 2006). Depending on time and day of the week, between 25 and 100 men waited for work outside the Home Depot on Arnelle Ave. Other factors that contributed to the size of this particular day labor market were its proximity to a trolley stop, and the long-standing tolerance for day laborers by local law enforcement (Fieldnotes 3/2006 – 4/2006).

In 2005, Home Depot reapplied for a permit to build a new store on East Main Street in El Cajon (See Figure 5-1). The company initially applied for the conditional use permit (CUP) in 1999, but their application was rejected by the El Cajon City Council. After considerable debate and community activism against the proposal, the city council reversed its previous decision when the company reapplied in 2005. The property on which the new Home Depot location was to be built is bordered on one
side by the city of Lakeside. Due to this accident of legal geography, the siting decision required not only the approval of a conditional use permit by the El Cajon city council, but the board of the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) also had to approve the property’s annexation to El Cajon from Lakeside. LAFCO is a state chartered regional regulatory agency with a number of responsibilities, one of which is approving any changes in municipal boundaries within San Diego County.

The bulk of data presented in this chapter is drawn from archival sources made available by LAFCO during their deliberations and for a short time afterwards. The data includes more than 10,000 petition signatures, hundreds of letters to the LAFCO board members and the El Cajon city councilmen, and eight hours of video recordings of city council meetings. All of the archival sources used in this research are part of the public record, however pseudonyms are used for all actors as the purpose of this chapter is not to expose individual residents’ personal fears or prejudices, but rather to examine the discursive definition of day labor(ers) among members of the opposition group, as well as the competing conceptualizations of community used by people on both sides of the conflict. In particular, I show that during the period of this conflict in El Cajon, community was always defined in ways that excluded jornaleros.
Figure 5-1: Proposed site for new Home Depot store on East Main St. in El Cajon, CA.
5.4 NIMBY-ISM versus Big Box Retail in Suburbia

The El Cajon city council meeting on July 12, 2005 was extremely well attended. Every one of the 150 seats was taken, while dozens more filled the exit aisle in a sweaty, agitated mass. These people were all there to voice their opinion regarding the siting decision for a new Home Depot location in eastern El Cajon. The majority of those in attendance were boisterously opposed to the proposal. The arguments voiced by the oppositional group were wide ranging; from the potential for increased noise and traffic problems, to the likelihood of neighborhood children being stalked, raped, and killed by day laborers who they believed would begin congregating outside the new Home Depot (City Council Meeting 07/12/2005).

In the section that follows, I focus on the way that the fear of day laborers as an imagined dangerous “other” motivated action among those who opposed the siting decision. The opposition mobilized by a fear of day laborers created a moment of crisis for local government officials transfixed on the need to attract capital to the city. Those residents’ fears were treated as a legitimate aspect of the arguments against the proposed new store, despite the fact that the El Cajon Police Department (ECPD) was on record stating that there was no connection between day laborers and crime (City Council Meeting 07/12/2005). By treating local residents’ fears as legitimate, the city council helped reproduce laborers’ marginality and as such contributed to their position at the bottom of a flexible post-Fordist labor market (Castree et al. 2004). These statements also discursively construct the boundaries of community in a way that excludes laborers from membership. The end result was a
government-sanctioned action that physically removed day laborers from the existing day-labor hiring site, located some three-and-a-half miles from the focus of the locational conflict.

5.4.1 Stranger Danger on Friendly Terrace: Fear of Day Laborers Mobilizes a Neighborhood

The four main issues raised by those opposed to the proposal for a new Home Depot store were traffic congestion and traffic-related public safety, environmental damage, noise pollution (from traffic and general operation of the store), and the possibility that day laborers would establish a hiring site near the new store. In fact, day labor was mentioned by fewer people than was traffic congestion and safety, noise problems, or environmental problems that the construction and operation of the store would cause. This is not to say that it was a small issue; over a third of the correspondence to members of the El Cajon city council and LAFCO board members cited day labor as one of their concerns, but fewer people cited day labor than the other major issues. Those that did mention day labor argued that day laborers were a dangerous element that would inevitably follow the new Home Depot into their neighborhood. Given the popular understanding of day laborers as “illegal” immigrants, one might expect that the focus of comments regarding day laborers would be linked to their perceived “illegal” status in the United States. Yet only one resident raised the issue of laborers’ immigration status or the Home Depot’s connection to the issue.
It is a fact that Home Depot, has built, staffed, supplied materials for, and paid for upkeep of day labor centers for "Day Workers", (illegal aliens). Illegal immigration is against the law, supporting these centers is therefore against the law. Home Depot is violating the law by supporting these centers. You, as a Council Member, should not allow these businesses to violate the law. It is your duty as an elected official to see the laws of the country and state are followed.- Letter to El Cajon City Council – received 7/7/2005.

Most of the statements regarding day labor focused on the criminality which residents inferred was inherent to all jornaleros. In some cases, the residents only alluded to the idea that day laborers were criminals or would resort to criminal activity when they could not find work.

If a Home Depot is built on that spot, we have to re-think the idea of starting a family and staying in the neighborhood. I don't want my child dealing with the high levels of diesel fumes, the noise the store would generate, and the amount of traffic that would come (8,000 more cars per day). Not to mention not getting a good nights sleep because of the big rigs off loading their cargo 24 hours a day. I especially don't want my child walking past day laborers just to get to school, I don't want to have to worry about my wife and child when I'm away at work.- Letter to LAFCO received 4/13/2006 - Emphasis Added.

Others, like the Smith family, were more direct with their concerns about day laborers’ potential for criminal activity.

To have Day Workers loitering in the area is very dangerous. We will probably have these Day Workers in our neighborhoods knocking on our doors looking for work. We will probably have more crime in the
area including stolen cars, break-ins to our homes and illegal activity. Our neighborhoods will not be safe. We will have to worry if these Day Workers are watching our children as they walk back and forth from school. They will see the same children everyday by themselves knowing they do not have a parent walking with them. Our children could be subjected to being harassed, asked for money or even stalked by these Day Workers, along with other more serious crimes that I will forego to mention. - Letter LAFCO received 4/27/2006 - Emphasis Added.

In their letter to the LAFCO board members, the Smiths express a fear that laborers will be compelled by boredom or inherent criminal instinct to leave the Home Depot and invade their neighborhood, going door to door looking for work. Smith’s fear that jornaleros would leave the area adjacent to the Home Depot in search of opportunities to break into homes, steal cars, or engage in other illegal activities was shared by many of their neighbors. Similarly, the concern that day laborers would be a danger to their children as they walked to school each morning was mentioned repeatedly by residents opposed to the proposal. The Joneses for example, not only worried about the direct threat that they believed laborers posed to their children, but additionally how the restrictions that they would have place on their children to protect them from laborers, would affect their children’s development into adulthood.

I will worry also about the safety of my children when they become old enough and want to walk or drive to school. I will have to take
away their independence out of fear for because of the extra traffic on the street that will take them to school and the day workers that will perch themselves outside at the openings of our homes. *What will the workers do when they can't find jobs?? Has anyone thought of that?? It makes me sick to even think about it! I believe that we as a community have the right to a safe environment to live in.*

If Home Depot is allowed to place a facility in our area, all of our lives will deteriorate. Our quality of life will be no longer, our children will never be the same. No more children will play on our streets or be allowed to venture off and become independent adults that we so want them to be. I know that all of this sounds mellow dramatic, but these are the things that keep our community up at night. – Letter to LAFCO received 4/18/2006 - Emphasis added.

The narrative of criminality applied to day laborers in this conflict mirrors the narrative of “illegality” applied to undocumented immigrants (Hiemstra 2010). However in this case, day laborers are not criminals simply by virtue of their assumed undocumented citizenship status. Laborers are assumed to be criminals with a penchant for predatory, violent criminal activities. Parents can hardly be faulted for wanting to protect their children; however, the insinuation that day laborers are dangerous criminals is baseless. In fact, during the city council meeting on July 12th, 2005, a representative for the El Cajon Police Department was on record stating that there was no connection between crime and day labor activities in the city (City Council Meeting, 07/12/2005). Despite a lack of evidence to support the narrative of
day laborer criminality, residents opposed to the new Home Depot continued to make their fearful beliefs clear.

The escalation of criminal accusations against day laborers reaches a peak in Margaret Henning’s July 12th 2005 statement to the El Cajon City Council.

We share a property line with the lot that they (Home Depot) own across the street which will be a *day worker haven*. This lot gives access to our backyards through a walkway, a walkway and hillside that offers them shelter for the night on private property in the bushes and trees. Our children would have to walk to school and to their bus stop, alone, past day workers as early as 6:30 AM. The EIR\(^ {14}\) fails to address that day workers are in the path of children walking to and from school and we have not received due process. The EIR does not include that. The stress factor alone is unbearable for an adult, not to mention a child. As *they watch us and learn our routines*, I would not feel safe for the children home alone, alone downstairs watching TV or playing in their own backyard. Because they (DL’s) will have access over a 4 foot fence to our backyard. We have 23 children on my street alone and all 8 families are financially obligated to stay or pay back up to an 85 thousand dollar “silent second” to the city and share the equity with them if we sell. Homes have doubled in price since we closed escrow in 12/03. None of us could afford to move to a safer neighborhood. I feel that our children will fall victim to crimes of opportunity such as Danielle Van Dam, Samantha Runnion, and Polly Klaas.

\(^{14}\) Environmental Impact Report
I highlight Margaret’s statement in particular because in it she makes explicit what many of her neighbors implied in their own statements and correspondence with public officials. In this emotional and fear-drenched narrative, day laborers are no longer simply men looking for work that might urinate in public or litter, but are dangerous pedophiles that will camp in her backyard, spy on and study her family’s routines, all with the goal of robbing the families and making their children the victims of horrific sexual violence. This is made clear when she references Danielle Van Dam, Samantha Runnion and Polly Klaas; three young girls who were kidnapped from their homes, sexually assaulted and murdered. None of the crimes she references, however, had any connection to day labor activities. Throughout the public hearing, the potential for criminality among day laborers was rhetorically juxtaposed to a romanticized notion of suburban life that never existed in the United States, much less East El Cajon (Coontz 1997, 2000). The fear inspired by the criminal day labor narrative proved to be a powerful motivator for oppositional activities. Mrs. Henning was extremely motivated to work against the development of the new store, and worked to stop the approval of the store proposal in several different ways: she spoke to the city council during the July 12th meeting, she collected “evidence” against the existing Home Depot by taking pictures of day laborers along Arnelle, homeless encampments which she submitted as evidence of day labor camps, she staked out the Arnelle Home Depot overnight, videotaping and recording the activity and sounds as evidence that the Home Depot could not obey noise regulations, and she reviewed the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the
site and identified errors to bring to the city council’s attention. Mrs. Henning also
collected petition signatures. Of the nearly 1200 signatures collected by the
neighborhood opposition group, Mrs. Henning personally collected 250 (Letter to
LAFCO, 4/12/2006). Clearly she was extremely motivated to keep the Home Depot
out of her neighborhood.

Mrs. Henning’s impact on the neighborhood opposition group should not be
understated. Though her pictures of day laborers and her transcript of the overnight
activities at the Arnelle Ave Home Depot had little impact on the city council’s
decision, (the mayor actually joked about the poor quality of the video recordings he
received from constituents), her organizational work and efforts in getting petition
signatures alerted hundreds of her neighbors to the proposal, forging connections
between neighbors and expanding the membership of the resistance group. Mrs.
Henning’s work provides an example, albeit a problematic one, of how a sense of
community is produced and embedded in place. Indeed, were it not for the
exclusionary and marginalizing language used by Mrs. Henning and other members
of the opposition to describe day laborers, her political mobilization could be viewed
as an admirable example of grassroots citizenship, which stands in contrast to
characterizations of political engagement and community building in suburban
America (Mitchell 2005). However, their use of language typically reserved for non-
humans (perch, stalk, etc.) and the perceived threat of sexual deviance are
disturbingly traditional discursive practices of othering (Said 1979), and in
particular, language tied to racism historically (Omni and Winant 1994). The use of
this language dehumanizes its subjects, and, in this case, defined day laborers not only as outsiders to the community of El Cajon, but of humanity as well – a point that is made clear by examining the ways that community was defined in El Cajon.

5.4.2 Defining the community: competing claims to community membership

In the debate regarding the East-Main Home Depot proposal, notions of community were evoked in multiple ways. What follows is not meant to be an exhaustive breakdown of the ways that the concept of community was used in public discussions. Rather, it is meant to demonstrate the lack of consistency within the debates as well as the absence of any community to which the day laborers belong. Finally, the multiple ways in which community was defined illustrate the place frames each group used to define their neighborhood and motivate political action.

The first manner in which community was defined pitted the “business community” against the “small-business and residential community.” This framing of community is common in NIMBY conflict regarding big-box retailers (Daniels and Lapping 1996; Halebsky 2009; Sites 2007). The pro-business community was most clearly evoked by Steve Lambert,15 the chairman of the East County Business Council, who argued that “El Cajon must be a business-friendly community. We’ve lost a lot of big businesses and we can’t afford to lose another one” (Statement to El Cajon City Council; 07/12/2005). The pro-business position took on explicitly

15 Steve Lambert was the chairman of the East County Business Council, as such, his name is not a pseudonym.
religious and nationalistic tones in the statement from Jim Kelly\textsuperscript{16}, the vice-chairman of the San Diego Republican Party Central Committee. In his statement before the El Cajon City Council, he argued that private property rights are god-given, and that opposing a land use decision was un-American or even “socialist” (Statement to El Cajon City Council; 07/12/2005). These types of statements that defined members of the opposition group as anti-business were challenged repeatedly in public hearing, as well as correspondence with public officials in El Cajon and on the LAFCO board. Members of the opposition group pointed out that the estimates of new tax revenue for the city of El Cajon were likely inflated because there were several smaller stores in the area that sold home improvement and landscaping products. Home Depot would likely put those stores out of business, reducing overall employment and simply shifting retail purchases from smaller stores to Home Depot. It is fair to say that none of the people who spoke in opposition to the Home Depot proposal exhibited anti-capitalist or anarchist political leanings. The insinuation of those tendencies was used to marginalize the opinions of residents who were opposed to the project. This was particularly evident in the public hearing for the proposal, in which both sides struggled to establish authority that validated their perspective. In the struggle for authority, community was mobilized in similar ways by those in support and opposition to the proposal.

The second way in which the boundaries of community were defined and contested during the debate was based on factors that presumably reflect individual

\textsuperscript{16} Jim Kelly is a significant public and political figure in the region and at the state level as well, as such, his name is not a pseudonym either.
investments in community. Length of residence in El Cajon, participation in community groups/sports, church membership, home ownership, and raising children in the city were some of the most common personal attributes mentioned to demonstrate an individual’s membership in the community. After stating their name and place of residence, nearly every opening statement before the El Cajon City Council began like Phil Carling’s, “I’ve been a resident of El Cajon for twenty years…” (Statement to El Cajon City Council; 07/12/2005). This basis for community membership is inherently exclusionary and class-based. When membership is defined by length of residence, home ownership or availability to participate in recreational activities – immigrants, the poor, and the working poor are disenfranchised respectively. For day laborers who recently arrived in the country, that makes them three-times-excluded.

The final way in which the boundaries of community were defined was based on the proximity of each person’s home to the proposed Home Depot location. Generally speaking, those who lived in close proximity to the proposed location were opposed to its approval, while those who lived further away supported the proposal. This effectively created a neighborhood community whose interests were in opposition to the city-wide community. This is typical of NIMBY conflicts, and indeed much of the language used by members of both sides of the conflict reflects stereotypical NIMBY arguments (Hermansson 2007; Thornton and Knox 2002). Area residents in support of the proposal echoed the sentiments of Ellen Hazelton who wrote, “Don't let special interest or a few selfish home owners rule the city (and
maybe they won't since it is not an election year)” in the margins of the petition she signed supporting Home Depot (Home Depot Supporting Documents Volume I – Submitted to LAFCO 4/16/2006, emphasis added). This characterizes the opposition members as selfish and unwilling to sacrifice for the betterment of the wider community. In contrast, the complaints from residents against the proposal focus on characteristics of the proposal itself. The traffic, pollution, noise, and, of course, potential for day laborers to congregate near the store. Interestingly, Shannon McMurtrey, a neighborhood resident and member of the San Diego Police Department, presented evidence at the July 12th, 2005 city council meeting that indicated that while there was no link between day laborers and crime, there was an established link between Home Depot locations and crime (primarily theft on Home Depot property – always lock your car) (Statement to El Cajon City Council; 07/12/2005).

Despite the conflicting ways in which opposition and support groups defined community, the one common characteristic was that day laborers were not part of any community. Further, the term “day laborer” was used as a proxy for racial or class-based descriptors of the poor, minority group; thus masking the underlying prejudice and misunderstanding on which some residents based their opposition. In practice, NIMBY arguments tend to avoid explicitly racial language. They instead focus on the negative externalities associated with development; noise, environmental damage, and the like (Wilton 2002; Hubbard 2005). A close examination of the public statements regarding day laborers reveals an important
difference from the typical NIMBY arguments. In El Cajon, statements about day laborers rarely focused on the “externalities” which are associated with hiring sites: traffic problems, public urination etc. Instead, residents addressed their fear of Otherness in their neighborhood directly, but chose language that disguised the underlying prejudice on which their fear was founded. Throughout the political process, residents used the term “day laborer” or “day worker” as a synonym for criminal or sex offender, and this definition of day laborer as someone or something to be feared went largely uncontested. As such, the value of day laborers to the community went completely unacknowledged, and the prejudice inherent in the statements made about day laborers was accepted as fact.

5.4.3 Reestablishing Control in El Cajon

Faced with considerable resident opposition to the Home Depot proposal, the city council sought simple answers to quell the concerns of their constituents. During the July 12th, 2005 El Cajon City Council meeting, day labor was one of the first issues the city council members considered. Their discussion centered on three main questions: why was there such a difference in the number of day labors congregating at the Home Depot in El Cajon and the next closest location? Why had El Cajon been unable to remove day laborers previously? And perhaps most importantly; would there be large day labor congregations at the new Home Depot location? During the council meeting there was no input from laborers who sought work at the El Cajon site, or anyone with experience working with day laborers. In the absence
of anyone with expertise on the subject, the councilmen and city staff speculated amongst themselves regarding each day labor concern, but none could offer an answer based on much more than their experiences as Home Depot customers. The one exception was the city attorney, who explained that because employment solicitation is a protected form of free speech, the city had been “hamstrung by the first amendment” in their previous attempts to remove day laborers from the street (City Council Meeting, 07/12/2005).

Throughout the course of the public hearing regarding the Home Depot proposal, residents repeatedly mentioned the size and tenure of the hiring site on Arnelle as they voiced their skepticism about the city’s ability to keep day laborers away from the new Home Depot (City Council Meeting 07/12/2005). This criticism of the city government proved effective in generating action against the day labor site. Steve Herbert argues that “spatial control is so crucial to the modern state that ineffective territoriality means, simply, incomplete state power” (1997, 15). The residents’ public statements demonstrated their collective lack of faith in the government’s ability to control space in the city. Coupled with the unchallenged definition of day laborers as dangerous criminals, the city’s inability to control day labor congregations put council members in a particularly uncomfortable political position. If they chose to approve the new Home Depot without demonstrating their ability to keep day laborers out of the city, the council would appear to be more concerned with satisfying big business than protecting its citizens. If they rejected
the proposal, the city stood to lose between $440,000 and $600,000 per year in new tax revenue.\textsuperscript{17}

The city took two specific actions to address residents’ concerns about day labor, both of which sought to forcibly relocate laborers through the annihilation of space. There was a concerted effort to remove day laborers from the area, followed by increased police presence on Arnelle Ave (see chapter four). To further address the fears of their constituents, the city council also required Home Depot’s architects adjust the design of the proposed store to discourage day labor congregation at the site. This type of architectural and landscape modification is similar to what others have called “bunker architecture” (Blakely 1997; Ellin 1997), which annihilates space through architectural design. Bunker architecture is a style of building and landscape design that is meant to physically protect particular people or groups from interaction with supposedly dangerous others. The new design called for fencing the entire edge of the parking lot to restrict pedestrian movement on and off the property. Sidewalks were moved back several feet from the curb and waist-high bushes would be planted between the sidewalk and the street to inhibit movement from the sidewalk to the street. The city government also agreed to zone the entire street frontage of the store as a no-parking zone. Day labor hiring cannot physically take place without employers stopping their cars. As such, red-curbing the entire street-facing side of the store effectively criminalizes the most crucial activity for the

\textsuperscript{17} Estimate drawn from El Cajon Police Department official correspondence to the El Cajon City Council, July 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2005.
day labor hiring process. All of these landscape modifications were done to restrict laborer and employer movement around the hiring site.

5.4.4 The Rest of the Story: The Current State of the East Main Home Depot

After a debate that was similar in form and substance to the one that took place before the El Cajon city council, LAFCO rejected the proposal and denied the city of El Cajon’s application to annex the southern border of the East Main property. In the years since this rejection, the City of El Cajon has appealed the decision and lost several times. The most recent and likely final rejection came from the Orange County Superior Court, on September 5th 2008.

In 2007, Home Depot was able to open a new store in another El Cajon location to replace the aging and undersized Arnelle Ave location. The approval process for this location was less controversial because Home Depot simply moved into a building that was formerly occupied by another big-box retailer. The new Home Depot is located a mile from the now closed Arnelle Ave site, and there is no day labor activity connected to the new location. This is likely due to a number of contributing situational factors. First, the site is relatively inaccessible by public transit. Second, the new Home Depot has employed all of the anti-day labor architectural features from its plans for the East Main location to this new store. These architectural features would make it very difficult to engage in day labor activities at the site (see Figures 5-2 and 5-3. Finally, the new Home Depot location
happens to be located directly adjacent to the El Cajon Police Department (see Figure 5-4).

Figure 5-2: Fenced edge of parking lot on north side of Fletcher Parkway, west of N. Magnolia Drive.
The location and design of the new Home Depot has not served to completely eliminate day labor activities in El Cajon. In the years since the police action, day laborers have returned in greater numbers to the original hiring site on and around...
Arnelle Ave. Though this hiring site no longer draws the nearly 100 laborers per day that it did in 2004-2005, it remains a medium sized (25-50 laborers) hiring site today despite the closure of the Home Depot location to which the site was initially connected. The return of laborers to the space is consistent with work by Herbert and Beckett (2010), which examined the effectiveness of banishment practices on the homeless in Seattle. They found that banishment orders were largely ineffective in keeping people from using particular spaces due in large part to the individual’s attachment to place. This attachment is bred in part by familiarity, but also because the places provide economically or socially in ways that help the consistently poor to survive. In similar fashion, attempts to banish laborers from Arnelle Ave proved ineffective in the long term due to the men’s attachment to the particular spaces in which they seek work. The connection to place exists for employers as well, who still frequent the hiring site in sufficient numbers to sustain the livelihoods of 25-50 laborers. In this way the Arnelle Ave site demonstrates that hiring sites, as places, have their own histories which carry a particular economic gravity which also provides; for laborers and their employers alike.

5.5 Community, Power, and Progress

The NIMBY opposition to the proposed Home Depot location in El Cajon provides an interesting window through which to view the complexity inherent to progressive activism. In El Cajon, residents of the neighborhood near the proposed Home Depot organized to stop the placement of a big-box retailer in their
neighborhood and were ultimately successful. Most of the opponents to the proposal made very convincing points regarding traffic, noise, pollution, and public safety, which had nothing to do with day labor and unquestionably prevented some level of environmental degradation in their neighborhood. Because the Home Depot was eventually able to move into a recently vacated big-box store, in an area with virtually no residential population, their success did not shift the burden of pollution exposure onto already over-burdened groups: an all-too-common outcome in siting decisions for polluting industries (Pulido 2000). But that was not the whole story. In this particular case, some community members mobilized against the store not simply because of the noise, traffic and pollution that the store would add to their neighborhood. Many of the local residents took action specifically because the proposed store was a Home Depot and they feared that building a Home Depot would draw day laborers into their neighborhood. These members of the opposition group used socially regressive stereotypes of day laborers, (which they believed to be true) in their efforts to sway the El Cajon City Council and LAFCO’s decision. These opinions and fears of day laborers may not have been held by the majority of neighborhood residents, most of who chose instead to focus their opposition on environmental problems posed by a big box retailer. However, no members of the opposition group challenged their neighbors’ characterization of laborers as dangerous criminals and potential sex offenders. Their strategic silence had negative consequences for laborers seeking work at the existing Home Depot, many of whom were residents of El Cajon, but whose voices were not included in the debate.
regarding the new location. The lone voice of support for the day laborers at Arnelle Ave came from Steve Jacobson – an employee of the Arnelle Ave Home Depot who spent a considerable amount of time interacting with the laborers while clearing shopping carts from the parking lot (Statement to the El Cajon City Council, 06/12/2005).

Ash Amin argues that community takes on different meanings in different socio-economic conditions, as well as in different institutional settings (Amin 2005). The multiple ways that notions of community were mobilized in the public debate over the proposed Home Depot location supports his argument. However, it is important not to understate the role of individual and group agency in manipulating the meaning of community to fit their desired outcome. Therefore, the meaning of community in a particular social, historical, geographic, and/or institutional context is not simply the outcome of a contextual equation with the various contributors to context (social, temporal, geographic, or institutional) as inputs and the particular definition of community as the output. Rather, the discourse of community is an important part of defining power structures in any social context, and community cannot be defined outside of its relation to structures of power. Exercising power over segments of the population through the control of discourses, like the discourse of community, is a powerful tool of governmentality (Foucault 1996). These discursive tools are increasingly significant part of neoliberal governing strategies at multiple scales. Within the neoliberal context, one’s ability to claim community membership is tied closely to their ability to exercise their voice in the political
sphere. For example, the discourse of illegality is produced in multiple ways but it is also directly tied to federal immigration policy and the militarization of the US-Mexico Border (Chacon and Davis 2006; Inda 2006; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). This discourse has powerful effects at the local and embodied scales for undocumented residents. The discourse of illegality, which labels undocumented immigrants as criminals, or undesired job thieves, produces behavioral effects in undocumented residents who fear being surveilled by the general public, or may even fear interactions with other migrants without legal status (Hiemstra 2010). The discourse of illegality is part of the production of a national definition of community, based on legal residency status, but problematically linked to racial, linguistic, and cultural practices (Hiemstra 2010; Inda 2006). And yet, as the multiple definitions of community above demonstrate, membership need not be tied to residency in the relevant jurisdiction. Members of the business community who lived outside of El Cajon were granted equal voice as local residents. Furthermore, the power to define the social axes along which community membership is defined establishes social structures that reinforce existing power structures and disempower the already disenfranchised (Allen 2003; Amin and Thrift 2002; Ettlinger 2004, 2011; Staeheli 2008). And yet, there are spaces of resistance even among those groups who are considerably disadvantaged in contemporary US society.

Day laborers appear to be a considerably disempowered group. They are poor minorities, many of whom lack full legal standing in the United States. Given these circumstances it is not so surprising that they were absent from the political process.
in El Cajon. Considerable research has demonstrated the significant challenges faced by low-income, low-education people and minorities to participate in the contemporary political processes (Adelman and Yalda 2000; Varsanyi 2007; Young 2000). Despite such challenges, laborers’ continued presence on Arnelle Ave is a testament to the strength of jornaleros in locational conflicts that affect their livelihoods. Within political processes specifically, laborers are increasingly making themselves heard at the regional and national scale through organizations like the Asociacion de Jornaleros de San Diego (AJSD) and National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON).

The public association of the Home Depot brand name with day labor added a significant second challenge for the company’s future expansion. Big box retailers, like Home Depot have faced NIMBY resistance in communities throughout the United States for some time (Condon 2003; Regan 2007; White 2007). This resistance is typically based on the negative effect a big box store will have on small businesses in the area, or the environmental issues associated with big box development. Home Depot now faces NIMBY resistance not only because it is a big box retailer, but also because of its connection to day labor; opposition which is nearly identical in form and substance to arguments against human services sites (Takahashi 1997b). Interestingly, Home Depot has drawn on the day-labor community for support when faced with opposition to siting decisions in a number of locations in the greater Los Angeles area. For example, they bussed in dozens of laborers and immigrants rights advocates to support a proposal for a new Home
Depot in Sunland-Tujunga – a small neighborhood on the suburban-rural fringe of Northern Los Angeles (Morris 2007). The company has also begun to “play the race card” in public debates about the location of new stores (Dare 2007). In one siting decision, a public relations firm employed by Home Depot produced materials which insinuated that the groups opposed to the new store were motivated by racism. Perhaps the most surprising development from this accusation was the public acknowledgement by opposition group members that a day labor hiring site already existed in their community, and that it was not a problem (Zimmerman 2007). It would be inaccurate to characterize the entire community as day labor supporters, as a number of residents mentioned the potential for “temporary workers” to be a public nuisance. However, in the Sunland-Tujunga case, mal-stereotypes of day laborers did not go uncontested in public debates as was the case in El Cajon. These small shifts in local socio-political geographies, create new spaces for productive dialogue, if not purely progressive resistance. As a result of this dialogue, Sunland-Tujunga may be the first community in the United States to publically accept day laborers as part of their community in an effort to keep Home Depot out of it.

5.6 Conclusion

The case study of opposition to day labor in El Cajon demonstrates the importance of research that focuses on the material effects of neoliberalism, what Brenner and Theodore call the “geographies of actually existing neoliberalism”

Despite the geographical specificity of the case in El Cajon, lessons from this case have wide applicability throughout the United States. Neoliberal ideology has achieved hegemonic status in America, so it is likely that day labor will continue to be “managed” primarily through indirect forms of social control. Only in periods of crisis will local government agencies engage in direct action to manage day labor within their jurisdiction. At a societal level, this practice has serious implications for struggles for social justice. Day labor is but one example of the ideological inconsistencies within neoliberal ideology. These inconsistencies generate periodic crises, at which point constituents expect the government to take action. David Harvey’s (1989) argument that neoliberalism produced a shift in the role of urban governments from managerialism to entrepreneurialism is certainly valid, but more emphasis should be placed on the increased burden of crisis management that the shift produced.¹⁹

When urban governments are faced with a crisis of legitimacy, for either the government or capitalism, the ideological directive to increase social control virtually guarantees that the crisis will be managed through the forceful manipulation of space. In the case of day labor, it is most likely that government agencies will continue to pursue banishment strategies to remove laborers. It is only through visible actions against day labor that the government can reassert its authority. The police are state-authorized distributors of violence, and from time to time must minimally use the threat of violence to achieve the socio-spatial control which

¹⁹ Harvey addresses this issue in depth in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) and several later works.
legitimates their existence (Herbert 1997). The spectacle of enforcement is also important to the construction of neoliberal ideology as common sense (Mitchell 2003, Harvey 2005). Highly visible anti-day labor police actions strengthen the public perception of laborers as a group to be feared, thus legitimizing the need to expand local government and police authority, for example, into immigration enforcement (Varsanyi 2008a). The relatively rare cases of day labor formalization highlighted in chapter four demonstrate the ways that community identity and government practice are intertwined. When possible, the local government identifies a community group, to provide social services and/or manage a conflict; ideally this group also provides all the financial resources required, as is the case in Escondido at Confia en Ti. When a local government provides support for formalization efforts, it suggests that the constituents in that area hold a more inclusive view of jornaleros as part of the local community. In every municipality, local authorities must manage day labor in a way that reflects their constituents’ definition of community, or risk exacerbating the crisis of legitimacy.

Yet the situation for jornaleros is not entirely bleak. Local governments’ need to maintain a low-cost workforce guarantees that anti-day labor actions will be short lived. As each crisis passes official attention will shift away from day labor spaces and activities. Police presence at day labor sites will be reduced, anti-day labor legislation will cease to be enforced with regularity, and the laborers will return to their preferred hiring sites. The laborers who have returned to the hiring site on Arnelle Ave in El Cajon are a clear example of the resistance, persistence and power
that reside within even the most marginalized groups. In the following chapter, I examine how jornaleros negotiate and maintain access to particular day labor spaces, and in so doing, exert their *right to the city* (Lefebvre 1996).
Chapter 6

Strategic Visibility and the Production of Day Labor Spaces

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I illustrate the ways that day labor activities are managed the vast majority of the time in San Diego County. Direct attempts to manage day labor activities by government and community groups, like those highlighted in Chapters Four and Five, are quite rare. In San Diego County, each intervention into the day labor market was precipitated by a crisis of legitimacy for local governments. When faced with these crises of legitimacy, governments are forced to shift their day labor management strategy from passive acceptance to directed formalization or annihilation of space for day labor activities. Indeed, direct forays into day labor management are rare regardless of the goals or methods used. These direct actions to try and manage day labor activities are rarely successful, and draw significant resources from already-strained government and community budgets. Direct interventions intended to remove or relocate day laborers are unsuccessful in San Diego because long-term access to particular spaces where they wait for employment matters more to jornaleros than relocating jornaleros matters to other stakeholders. Jornaleros are willing to sacrifice more to maintain access to the spaces they depend on for their social and economic well-being.

To show this, I examine the production of day labor spaces in detail. The analysis draws from participant observation conducted at all 43 informal hiring sites
in San Diego County. I present representative examples of specific sites, at the scale of the day labor space, to further support the strategic visibility hypothesis presented in Chapter 2. The chapter is divided into three general sections. In the first part of the chapter, I examine the day-to-day interactions and negotiations that structure day labor life, however informally, and establish the daily rhythms of the city. I position this research within the relational perspectives on the production of space and governmentality practices (Amin and Thrift 2002; Foucault 1977; Massey 2005; Murdoch 2006). Relational perspectives focus on the content of spaces and how that content is continuously made and remade through the interaction of multiple processes acting upon, and influenced by, place (Massey 2005). Governmentality practices are means of controlling behaviors of individuals indirectly, though establishment of social norms or discourses, such that people choose to behave in ways that align with the interests of those in power (Allen 2003). In the second section, I apply the concept of strategic visibility to the microgeographic scale. Laborers’ collective employment of strategic visibility in informal hiring site selection is the key factor in their ability to maintain access to particular spaces. The findings from this analysis run counter to the prevailing assumptions regarding the effects of governmentality practices on jornaleros’ behaviors.

Generally speaking, discourses that label day laborers (and undocumented immigrants alike) as dangerous or unwelcome ‘others’ do not lead laborers to alter their employment-seeking strategies. Rather, laborers wait for work in spaces that best serve their needs as jornaleros. Of particular import in this analysis is the
argument that the “best’ spaces for day labor are not necessarily the most visible spaces. Therefore, laborers may look for work in spaces where their public visibility is reduced, but careful study of the operation of day labor markets shows that the basis for laborers locational selection is not the result of self-policing to reduce visibility or remain “in the shadows” (Chavez 1998). Rather, the spaces are selected for their functionality. The final section highlights the non-economic uses of day labor spaces, and the ways that jornaleros informally regulate their spatial organization and acceptable behaviors within day labor spaces. The combination of these entangled socio-spatial relationships between laborers, nearby stakeholders, and day labor spaces themselves create an emotional geography that connects individuals to place in profoundly meaningful ways (Bosco 2001, 2006, 2007b; Davidson et al. 2005; Davidson and Milligan 2004; Pile 2010).

6.2 Governmentality and the Production of Day Labor Space

A common complaint among day labor stakeholders is that governments’ fail to take action either for or against day laborers in their jurisdiction (Toma and Esbenshade 2001). And their complaint is justified to some extent. Passive acceptance is the most common approach to day labor management throughout the United States (Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006). When local governments take no official action regarding day labor, it does not mean they are unaware of day labor activities or are uninterested in controlling where, when, and how jornaleros look for work. It simply means that they allow day labor to be managed informally, without direct
engagement from the government. This practice is consistent with the movement from direct forms of governance to indirect forms of social control, what Foucault called *governmentality*: the techniques of governing (Foucault 1991). It is only in situations where indirect forms of social control fail to adequately constrain behaviors that a government will take direct action, as was the case in Chapter Four. In the absence of direct government engagement, the locations of day labor hiring sites and the activity at the sites are managed informally through spatially mediated social interactions.

Day labor spaces are activity areas in which jornaleros wait for potential employers, negotiate the terms of each job, eat, drink, socialize, and otherwise spend the time in-between each employment negotiation. To be clear, day labor spaces are not the locations where jornaleros perform paid labor; day labor spaces are the general areas where jornaleros wait to be hired. Day labor spaces are produced through these informal negotiations between actors: the socio-spatial relationships that define where, when, and how day laborers solicit employment every day. As a result of the constant renegotiation between actors, the boundaries of day labor spaces are flexible and fluid. Day labor spaces are permeable, adaptable, and can be non-contiguous in some cases.

Spatial negotiations in the city depend on the immediacy of social interactions, which collectively constitute what Lefebvre calls “the music of the city” (1996 p. 227, quoted in Amin and Thrift 2005). Lefebvre further argues that understanding the rhythms of daily life; the differing speeds and interaction between pedestrian and
automobile traffic, the comings and goings of shopkeepers and customers, even the
sounds and smells at different times of the day, requires patient observation and
reflection (1996 p. 101, quoted in Amin and Thrift 2002). As such, participant
observation is the most appropriate research method for analyzing urban rhythms.
The data for this section is compiled from more than 500 individual visits to day
labor sites throughout the county, and hundreds of hours of observation (Fieldnotes
2006-2011).

Urban rhythms are not limited to the movements of and activities of people. They also include institutional regulations, infrastructural constraints, automated
machinery, the migratory patterns of animals and a myriad of other elements out of
the direct control of individual inhabitants of the city. John Allen provides a
thorough definition in his essay “Worlds within Cities”:

“By city rhythms, we mean anything from the regular comings
and goings of people about the city to the vast range of repetitive
activities, sounds and even smells that punctuate life in the city and
which give many of those who live and work there a sense of time
and location. This sense has nothing to do with overall orchestration
of effort or any mass coordination of routines across a city. Rather it
arises out of the teeming mix of city life as people move in and
around the city at different times of the day or night, in what appears
to be a constant renewal process week in, week out, season after
Individuals use the rhythms of the city to frame their daily experiences; these rhythms are critical for understanding the routine interactions and negotiations between jornaleros and other stakeholders that collectively produce day labor spaces. People understand order in the city as consistency in the “vast range of repetitive activities” and the sense of time and location that those activities provide. As Allen points out, this is not to argue that city rhythms are fixed or consciously organized, but that order is constituted through the production of a multitude of overlapping daily rhythms (Allen 1999; Amin and Thrift 2002). Therefore, disorder is identified by individuals as notable changes in daily practice or experience. It is the embodied effect of changes in city rhythms.

Analysis of urban rhythms within the contemporary city must acknowledge the role of governmentality practices in shaping the movement and behaviors of individual inhabitants. Governmentality practices refer to methods of indirect social control, which neoliberal governments increasingly rely upon to regulate the behaviors of area residents. Recently a number of authors have drawn on Foucault’s conceptualization of governmentality for understanding how some groups are controlled through indirect techniques of governing (Herrera 2010; Hiemstra 2010; Inda 2006). In these perspectives, power is exercised through the normalization of particular knowledges and representations, which define appropriate forms of conduct and induce those behaviors in others. This notion, as John Allen eloquently points out “appears to be quite unremarkable – until, that is, one recognizes that the techniques of power only show up as an effect on the actions of others. There are no
direct constraints on behavior, no overt sanctions or prohibitions on what should and should not be done” (2003, 67).

The narrative of immigrant “illegality” provides an example of a technique of governmentality that, without making use of any direct behavioral constraints, sanctions or prohibitions, leads individuals to behave in ways they otherwise would not. The effects of the “illegality” discourse are quite significant, marginalizing Latinos, regardless of documentation status, both socially and economically. In a case study from Leadville, Colorado, Nancy Heimstra highlights a number of the effects of “illegality” narrative. First, cheap immigrant labor is vital to the industries that have grown under neoliberal philosophy: “by categorizing immigrants in particular ways, the federal government puts into place a self-sustaining, multi-scalar system for managing and controlling their labor” (2010, 94). Second, illegality depends on a particular understanding of the national border. Within discourse of illegality, the border between the United States and Mexico is symbolically defined as a dividing line between order and deviance, danger and safety, lawful citizens and criminal migrants (Chacon and Davis 2006; Inda 2006). When combined with the shift of responsibilities from the state to the individual and local community, the illegality narrative has the potential to make any resident an immigrant surveiler. Both of the above effects limit immigrants’ mobility in their areas of residence (Heimstra 2010). Because there is no visual marker of citizenship status, all minority bodies are marginalized and subject to increased surveillance and scrutiny when they seem “out of place” (Cresswell 1996).
Most existing research that draws on the *right to the city* focuses on the actions of groups that are understood to be powerful in the popular imagination: the state, police agencies, and corporations, against groups thought to be powerless in the popular imagination: the poor, homeless, minorities, and immigrants. This body of research provides substantial evidence in support of the argument that truly public spaces are shrinking in the neoliberal city. The political processes that determine government policy often exclude the groups most affected by new regulations. The battle for the right to the city is fought through the occupation of public spaces in defiance of physical or regulatory actions meant to remove particular groups from the shared spaces of the city. Large scale occupations of public spaces can be used effectively in political protest and to create spectacle that draws attention to a particular issue. It is equally important to recognize the importance of everyday occupations and constant negotiations that determine access and control of space in practice (Crotty and Bosco 2008; Low and Smith 2006; Mitchell 2003; Swanson 2007, 2010). The increasing importance of indirect forms of governance in the neoliberal city has drastic implications for *right to the city* research, because when governmentality practices are successful, individuals choose to avoid particular spaces on their own. In that case, the battle for the *right to the city* is not lost, it simply never begins.

The unfortunate aspect of existing research examining the *right to the city* is that by ignoring the ways that individuals and groups resist, rework, and remake spaces in the city, it can potentially further marginalize the groups whose plight it sought to
In the context of day labor studies, understanding the production of space as trajectories of overlapping daily rhythms is crucial, as it sharpens analysis of social dynamics among area stakeholders that can generate conflict. Early research on day labor conflicts argued that day laborers are viewed as “out of place” in suburban landscapes, normatively understood as “white” places (Esbenshade 2001; Crotty 2007). Yet even within highly racialized landscapes such as suburbia, day labor sites fail to generate contentious community conflicts more often than not. I argue that this is the result of two overlapping processes: laborers’ collective employment of strategic visibility, and the production of normalcy through sustained presence of day labor hiring sites in particular locations. Through these two spatial practices jornaleros “secrete” space, thereby transforming representations of space into representational space (Merrifield 2002, 90).

6.3 Strategic Visibility

Success as a day laborer depends on strategic visibility. Strategic visibility is the result of the complex and contradictory spatial demands of day labor life. A day laborer must be both visible and accessible so that a potential employer can see him, and then approach him to negotiate the terms of employment. This need pushes the individual laborer to make himself as visible as possible, thereby increasing the number of potential employers who are aware of his availability. However, laborers are also dependent on the continued existence of the hiring site for their future

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20 Herbert and Beckett’s (2010) work examining homeless individuals’ connection to place in Seattle is a notable exception.
employment. This leads laborers to avoid activities that draw negative attention and could jeopardize laborers’ collective access to the space.

The term day laborer is so closely associated with “illegal immigrant” in public discourse in the United States that the terms are treated as roughly synonymous (Varsanyi 2008a). Therefore day laborers are viewed by many members of the general public as dangerous or threatening elements, simply by virtue of their visible presence (Cresswell 1996; Roberts and Mahtani 2010; Varsanyi 2008a; Hiemstra 2010; Massey 2005; Esbenshade 2000). It must be noted however, that effects of governmentality practices are spatially mediated. This leads to differences in public perceptions of immigrants and minorities from place to place. The power of discourse-based governmentality practices is that the people it refers to, in this case immigrants, cannot know with certainty which members of the public accept the negative associations made in the discourse. When governmentality practices are successful, members of the target group alter their own behavior, potentially to their own detriment, in order to avoid scrutiny from the public. There is little evidence to support the argument that the desire to avoid public scrutiny significantly affects day laborers’ locational selection process.

Day laborers do not reduce their visibility simply as a result of the regressive and inaccurate stereotypes perpetuated by the narrative of illegality. The strategies employed by laborers are adapted to make the best use of particular spaces for employment and a variety of other purposes. Furthermore, jornaleros’ voluntary reduction in visibility does not necessarily translate into reduced employment
opportunities or fortunes relative to other laborers at the site. If finding a job were simply a function of the number of people to whom a laborer was visible, hiring sites would only exist on the largest and most heavily trafficked roads. Only 7 percent of informal hiring sites in California are located along ‘busy streets’ (Gonzalez 2007, 8). That such a small percentage of hiring sites exist on “busy roads” is evidence of a more nuanced locational strategy used by most jornaleros. The foundation for strategic visibility lies in the distinction between visibility and accessibility – and how both are shaped by the site and situational characteristics of particular places. The fortunes of day laborers depend to a greater degree on accessibility than visibility, and roads with high traffic flows are often less accessible than less-visible spaces nearby. In San Diego County, only 29 percent of day labor sites are located within 100 feet of a major road, but 96 percent of the sites are located within 1000 feet of a major road. Hiring a day laborer is not an impulse decision. Employers know where hiring sites are located and depend on laborers to be in the same places each time they want to hire help. Hiring sites located near to, but not on, busy roads are convenient for employers and do not create unnecessary problems for the general public. The problems to which I refer are not increased exposure to the wider public who may view laborers as dangerous “illegal” immigrants. Rather, I refer to the more immediate problems such as hazardous traffic conditions if employers stop their vehicles on major thoroughfares while negotiating employment details with jornaleros.
Strategic visibility is employed by day laborers at every informal hiring site in San Diego County – regardless of the type of day labor site. *Jornaleros* at urban-informal-connected sites use remarkably similar logic in their spatial organization as those at canyon-adjacent, or even suburban-commercial-hub sites. Laborers using strategic visibility balance the desire to be as accessible as possible to potential employers, and the desire to keep public sentiment regarding day labor as positive as possible. The greatest risk to laborers’ access to space is anti-day-labor sentiment to manifest in the bystander public, which could lead local authorities to take action and attempt to annihilate day labor spaces. To keep sentiment positive or, more commonly, to avoid generating negative sentiment, laborers try to stay out of the way of the general public. Staying out of the way is not the same thing as hiding. Laborers congregating in spaces where employers can easily pull over and not block traffic is a good example of a spatial practice that accomplishes both of the primary goals for jornaleros. At each informal hiring site, laborers must negotiate the particular site and situational characteristics in order to maximize their accessibility and minimize their physical obtrusiveness to the general public.

Laborers’ ability to change the physical design and infrastructure at an informal hiring site is limited. The existence or situation of sidewalks, shade trees, buildings, parking lots, and driveways are static. Activity in the spaces is not static, however, and the intensity of activity varies spatially and temporally. Local traffic patterns and the operating hours of nearby businesses are just two of the many factors that influence the production of day labor space. *Jornaleros* move and adjust the
boundaries of day labor spaces throughout the day in response to daily rhythms of the city as well. In San Diego County, the hiring site located on 33rd Street just south of El Cajon Boulevard in the city of San Diego is a good example of an urban-informal-connected site where laborers take advantage of the street and building layout to make themselves strategically visible (Figure 6-1). The site is very convenient for employers, as it is one-tenth of a mile from the 805 freeway, and is positioned along one of the major east-west thoroughfares in San Diego. The day labor space is adjacent to a Frazee Paint store located on the Southeast corner of El Cajon Blvd and 33rd Street. Laborers congregate primarily in two areas along the 33rd Street where (marked A and B in Figure 6-1). This situation also renders the site nearly invisible to cars passing on the busy street, but allows laborers to congregate directly adjacent to the primary parking area for customers of the paint store. For the first few hours of each day there is very little activity in the parking lot on the west side of 33rd Street. The bank does not open until 9 a.m. each day, and though the grocery store (Pancho Villas) is open, its customers tend to park on the northwest side of the parking lot, which is closer to the store’s entrance. During this time, and in response to the minimal parking lot traffic, laborers extend their waiting area farther into the parking lot (marked C in Figure 6-1). This provides greater space for negotiating with employers, and other non-employment related activities. As traffic increases throughout the morning, the day labor space shrinks as the jornaleros relocate a few feet to avoid disturbing customers of the bank and grocery.
Laborers at the canyon-adjacent site in north San Diego shown in Figure 6-2 similarly use the street layout to make themselves strategically visible. At this site laborers primarily congregate along Azuaga Street in the area marked “A” in Figure 6-2. From this position their visibility is minimized for traffic on Rancho Penasquitos Blvd, but they are easily accessible for any employer who wishes to hire help for the day. Laborers at this site also adjust their locational strategies according to the urban rhythms. Early in the morning, and sometimes late in the afternoon (after 7pm), a few laborers will wait in the area marked “B” in Figure 6-2. From this
position, the laborers are more visible, but no more accessible. Extending the day labor space on Azuaga Street to the corner of Rancho Penasquitos drive was a much less common practice than the daily expansion and contraction of the day labor space on 33rd Street. In my twenty-two visits to the day labor space on Azuaga Street, I only saw laborers waiting on the corner five times, and I was not able to determine a particular factor in their choice other than the time of day and possibly boredom. In my conversations with laborers at the Azuaga St hiring site, none conveyed a specific reason for waiting in one space versus another (Fieldnotes 2007-2011).

![Figure 6-2: Canyon-Adjacent hiring site in north San Diego](image)

At this site, I came to know a *jornalero* from Jalisco, Mexico named Hector. Hector is about sixty years old and spends seven months a year in San Diego working to support his family in Jalisco. He returns to Jalisco the remaining months
to be with his wife and three of their six children, who live at home. Hector has made the trek from Jalisco to San Diego each of the past forty years. Every year he returns to the same day labor space to look for work. Though the type of work for which he is hired changes with the continual shift from agricultural land use to suburban residential, the physical space he occupies (and depends on) in the community has not. When I asked Hector why some laborers waited closer to the corner, he was nonplussed: “I don’t know. The whole street is the same. I wait here… I wait there… it’s all the same (Fieldnotes 06-18-2011).”

When there is no convenient side-street to use for a hiring site, laborers often use physical barriers and the situational characteristics to control the extent to which they are visible. Another simple way jornaleros make themselves less visible is by waiting in a space that is 10-20 feet from the road. This simple action keeps the men out of the line of site of a great number of drivers. Figure 6-3 is of a canyon-adjacent site located along an old state highway in northern San Diego. At this site laborers congregate in a parking lot adjacent to a nursery and convenience grocery store. A hiring site has existed in this space for more than 30 years, and though the site is connected to the nursery to which it is adjacent, a great number of the individuals who hire day laborers from this site are not customers of the nursery. Once a potential employer enters the parking lot, the laborers are clearly visible and accessible; the areas where the men wait for work are considerably less visible to passing traffic. The laborers congregating in area ‘B’ use the nursery’s tree-line to

21 “No se. Todo la calle es igual. Busco aqui, busco alla… todo es igual.”
reduce their visibility, while another group of laborers waits in and around their own automobiles in area A. Both waiting areas are a sufficient distance from the main road to reduce their visibility to non-employers as they pass the site at 50 miles per hour. It also would be impractical for the laborers to negotiate terms of a job with an employer on the main road. There is no safe space for the employer to stop his/her car out of the flow of traffic, which moves quite quickly on this old state highway. Therefore, though the jornaleros’ locational strategy at this site reduces their visibility, their locational strategy is also practical. Laborers do not choose to wait away from the main road to avoid publicity or surveillance. The less-visible spaces work better for day labor activities, so the jornaleros choose to wait away from the main road.

Figure 6-3: Canyon-Adjacent hiring site in Carlsbad
Negotiating the informal rules of behavior and interaction can be challenging for newly arrived laborers and ethnographic researchers alike. It takes time to learn the particular rhythms and socio-spatial dynamics that govern each day labor space. There are a myriad of factors that go into spatial decision making for day laborers; however, the relationships developed as jornaleros learn the informal rules of each day labor space connect each laborer to the site in important and meaningful ways. This connection to place means that laborers rarely switch sites after they select a space to wait for work (Turnovsky 2004, 2006). The regularity of socio-spatial activity at each site provides stability in a profession where stability is rare, and continuity is highly valued. Strategic visibility at the microgeographic scale is an important element in the production of day labor space, but it does not prevent conflict in every case. Claims to space must be negotiated continually, and though these negotiations do sometimes generate conflict, they also produce affective bonds that connect the day labor space to stakeholders in the neighborhood.

6.4 Locational Conflict, Cooperation, and the Production of Day Labor Space

Access to, and control of, all spaces is negotiated at some level. These negotiations between laborers and other stakeholders can be cordial, or decidedly less so. The stakeholders in each day labor space vary, but there are a number of common actors. Jornaleros, customers, employees and owners of nearby businesses, local area residents, police agencies and property owners all have a “stake” in the
everyday activities in day labor spaces. Jornaleros are stakeholders themselves, though for discursive clarity, in the remainder of this chapter I will use the term stakeholder to refer to all actors except jornaleros unless I explicitly state otherwise. In all negotiations, stakeholders use resources at their disposal to try and create their desired outcome.

Throughout the course of the fieldwork for this project, I found that there was very little tension in the relationships between laborers and stakeholders in the immediate vicinity of day labor activity. At informal hiring sites in San Diego County, business owners were mostly indifferent to the presence of jornaleros near their stores. A number of stores and shopping centers employ security guards to regulate the activities that occur on their property, but day labor activity was not the impetus for hiring a security guard at any site in the county. Few stakeholders actively worked to prevent laborers from congregating in the general area, though some of the limitations to private control of space which will be discussed below certainly influenced the business owners’ decisions regarding attempts to control day labor. Most took no action related to day laborers, and a few took actions to address the most common problems that arise as a result of the jornaleros’ presence (Fieldnotes 2006-2010).

6.4.1 Contentious relationships

The stability I observed in the locations of day labor hiring sites in San Diego County is not necessarily indicative of stakeholder approval of day labor activities.
In some cases it is simply the result of laborers’ ability to adapt day labor spaces to shifts in social, legal, and even physical geography in the places they wish to wait for work. As a group, laborers draw on non-traditional resources that other stakeholders in negotiations for control of space simply will not or cannot match. Need, time, and cooperation are particularly important resources for laborers in their struggle to maintain access to preferred spaces for congregation (Crotty and Bosco 2008).

Changes in the microgeography of a day labor space can occur under a number of circumstances. The most common circumstance is when a new stakeholder enters the daily negotiation for control of space. One such occasion is when nearby properties, or the businesses on said properties, change ownership or management. This introduces new actors who are invested in the space, with the authority to restrict access to private property. Figure 6-4 shows a canyon-adjacent day labor space in Northwest San Diego County.
Figure 6-4: Canyon-Adjacent hiring site in Encinitas

According to a long-time area resident, day labor activity at this site dates to the 1970’s (Personal communication, 05-16-2006). For most of that time, laborers congregated primarily in the area marked “A” in Figure 6-4. In 2010, all jornaleros stopped congregating in area “A.” The bulk of the men moved across the street to the area marked “B.” A smaller group of jornaleros moved to the area marked “C.” According to laborers in both of the newly established waiting areas, the impetus for their movement from the traditional waiting area was a change in ownership of the adjacent commercial shopping center (Fieldnotes 09/06/2010). The new owner did not approve of the laborers congregating along the driveway to the shopping center and repeatedly called the local police to visit the site and remove the laborers. The laborers acquiesced to the owner’s request and simply found new areas to congregate
nearby. Both of the new areas are easily accessible and near enough to the original waiting area that any employer who visited the site to hire help would certainly still be able to connect with the jornaleros. In fact, both areas “B” and “C” are improvements in terms of the jornaleros’ strategic visibility compared to area “A.”

In area “B,” laborers congregate in a shaded area along the back end of an underutilized parking lot. In that space there is little traffic, so negotiations can take place comfortably and the jornaleros are considerably less visible to the bystander public. Area “B” is on private property, but straddles the property line between two hotels, so laborers can easily cross the boundary that determines legal authority within the day labor space. Laborers who wait in area “C” wait along the public sidewalk generally next to their personal vehicles, which are parked on the side of the street. Area “C” is clearly visible from the northbound interstate exit ramp, so it is at least equally visible as area “A”, but it even more accessible because the road design allows for employers to safely pull to the side of the street to negotiate the terms of employment. To hire help at site “A” employers had to pull all the way into the shopping center parking lot, or stop their vehicles in moving traffic on Encinitas Blvd. As the laborers shift the areas where they congregate, they must negotiate access to space with other stakeholders. Because the laborers in area “C” congregate almost entirely in public spaces, there is little that the police can do to prevent them from occupying that space without committing to long-term physical presence themselves. Moreover, even long-term police presence is no guarantee that day-labor activity would cease in area “C.” In this particular municipality, there are no existing
regulations that provide legal justification for forcibly relocating laborers (or any other resident) from a sidewalk.\textsuperscript{22} Therefore, the laborers who congregate in area “C” have a substantially stronger position in their negotiation for controlling space than do the laborers who congregate in area “B”, which is located on the property line between two commercial properties. Either owner could seek the police’s assistance in enforcing their private property rights and relocating the jornaleros. The challenge in this type of negotiation is the persistence of the property owner in enforcing his right to control space relative to the laborers’ need to access the space in their search for employment. Local police can only force laborers to leave the complainants’ private property. Like all residents of the United States, laborers’ have the right to congregate in public spaces. When laborers congregate on private property, however, the police can arrest them for criminal trespassing. Alternatively, the police may ticket them for misdemeanor loitering, and force them to move to the public sidewalk. The former is a fairly severe punishment that would likely not hold up in court, and the latter is rather ineffectual if the police are unwilling to dedicate significant time to directly policing the day labor space: jornaleros could simply move back onto private property after the police leave the area. Area “B” sits at the property line between two hotels, so the laborers could also move from one property to the other according to the shifting tides of tolerance from either owner (though there is no evidence that they have done so at this hiring site) (Field-notes 09/06/2010).

The importance of understanding the microgeographic dimensions of individual hiring sites is made clear by examining the socio-spatial relationships that govern the production of day labor space at sites connected to Home Depot stores. Officially, the company has no position on day labor issues.

"The existence of this issue is one that's beyond the Home Depot's control… Like many businesses, we have a policy of non-solicitation of our stores by individuals and organizations who aren't affiliated with our company. The reason for that is really simple - our customers tell us they want a shopping experience that's easy and comfortable" (quoted in Greenhouse 2005).

This statement by a Home Depot spokesperson provides insight into the key factor for regulation of day labor activities connected to Home Depot stores: consumer comfort. Examining the regulation of day labor activities near Home Depot stores in the San Diego area provides further evidence of the flexibility in day-labor-management strategies exercised by the manager of each store. Every Home Depot location in the San Diego area employs a security guard who is tasked with enforcing their non-solicitation policy. There is considerable variation however in the degree to which this directive is enforced between Home Depot locations. The differences in day labor management between store locations can be attributed to two factors: the personality of the private security guard assigned to each location, and the majority opinion regarding day labor of the customers who visit particular store locations.
The security guards assigned to Home Depot stores are contracted through a private security firm, and their continued assignment at a particular location depends on meeting the demands of the store manager. Many of the security guards empathize with the day laborers’ situation and in some cases even refuse to police the laborers’ activities. One such security guard named Joe described his experience on his first, and last day assigned to a Home Depot store.

“I just hate people being hypocritical. These guys are just looking for work and I’m supposed to keep them off the property? I took this shift as a favor to my boss. He said they needed someone to cover it so I did, but he didn’t say shit about what I was supposed to do here. I thought it was parking lot security job, watching cars and shit. Then she (the manager of the Home Depot) comes running over saying “One of them is in the parking lot.” I asked her who they were. She said “the day workers.” Bullshit. I ain’t never working here again” - (personal interview 7/24/2006)

In the majority of cases, however, the security guards’ ability to relate to the jornaleros and communicate in a respectful manner facilitates relatively stable socio-spatial environment at each site. Situations where security guards are hyper-vigilant in policing day labor activities are less frequent, and reflect differences in tolerance for day labor activity among the customers at the locations. In the absence of customer complaints, laborers are left to negotiate access to space amongst themselves and with the security guard. When customers complain about day labor
activities, the security guards are instructed to take actions to restrict day laborers’ activities more severely (Personal Communications 01/2006 – 08/2011). This is the case at the Home Depot location on El Camino Real in the city of Encinitas, located in northwest San Diego County (Figure 6-5).

![Figure 6-5: Urban-Informal-Connected Site in Encinitas](image-url)

Early in the mapping portion of this project, I observed laborers at this Home Depot location congregating primarily in the area marked “A” in figure 6-5. From this space, the laborers were beyond the line of site of passing cars on El Camino Real, and also out of the way for the majority of Home Depot customers. In this space they are accessible to employers while reducing their public visibility. Their locational decision at this site also illustrated their collective respect for the Home Depot customers who did not wish to hire labor that day. At this particular location,
the laborers’ employment of strategic visibility did not prove sufficient to eliminate complaints from non-employers. The areas of day labor congregation changed at this site in 2008, when customer complaints led to a change in the security guard assigned to the store location. The new security guard took a much more direct and aggressive position in restricting laborers’ access to private property; as a result laborers now congregate on public sidewalks near the driveways at the northern and southern ends of the parking lot (areas B and C). These driveways are used considerably less than the middle driveway, so there is less potential for congestion when employers stop their vehicles in the driveway to negotiate terms for a job.

Laborers also congregate in the area marked “D”, which straddles the line between Home Depot’s property and undeveloped space to the south. From all of these new positions, laborers can make themselves accessible to employers, and are positioned such that it is difficult for Home Depot to effectively exercise their right to control activity on the company’s property.

These new areas of day labor congregation are much more visible than area “A”, and would be less accessible to employers if Home Depot management did not also view laborers’ employers as customers. According to the security guard assigned to the store during the main hours for day labor activity, the laborers must remain on public property until an employer pulls onto Home Depot property, at which point the jornaleros are allowed to enter the parking lot and negotiate their terms of employment (Personal Communication 5/19/2011). Even at sites where laborers are
viewed as a problem, Home Depot’s priority is always providing a comfortable shopping experience for Home Depot customers.

The challenge for private security guards is to negotiate the fine line between vigilance in managing day labor activities and maintaining a comfortable environment for customers. Store managers are motivated primarily by customer complaints. So complaints about laborers demand harsher enforcement, while complaints about how a security guard is interacting with laborers and employers (who are also store customers) can lead to a security guard’s reassignment. Finding a security guard whose personality “fits” with a particular location’s day labor dynamic often takes time – so security guards may be moved to a few different locations before being assigned to one store indefinitely. The relationship building that security guards undertake in the course of their work is a kind of “affective labor” (Hardt and Negri 2004). Affective labor is labor that “produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 107). Affective labor is a crucial dimension of employment in the contemporary economy, and in the service sector especially – think “service with a smile” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 108). For example, a waiter’s function is to take orders and deliver that order to the table without mistakes. However, a good waiter also develops rapport with customers, makes them feel welcome and well attended to, and otherwise provides a pleasurable social experience. Therefore, success as a waiter requires considerable cultural capital and social skills that are quite distinct from the training that allows the waiter to perform
the basic functions of his job. The case is similar for private security guards. Though a security guard ostensibly works to prevent criminal activity in a particular space, in this case, Home Depot parking lots, the job actually requires significant emotional and affective skills to build functional relationships, not only with jornaleros, but also with customers, managers, and other area stakeholders. Therefore, their work implicitly contributes to the production of day labor spaces and generates emotional linkages that connect them to the day laborers, and the spaces, they police.

As these few examples should make clear – even when tensions exist or increase between laborers and stakeholders in or around day labor spaces, they almost never form the basis for a conflict at the neighborhood, municipal, or broader scales. Stakeholders use the resources available to them to exert influence and control space in particular ways, but the temporal and spatial negotiations that produce day labor spaces also generate affective bonds between individuals and groups. These affective bonds are embedded in place, as they not only connect stakeholders to each other, but also to the particular day labor spaces where the emotional connections were made. Overall, particular emotional geographies emerge (Bosco 2001, 2006, 2007) where affective bonds decrease animosity, and in many cases generate productive and supporting arrangements between laborers and stakeholders in day labor spaces.

6.4.2 Reciprocity in Jornalero-Stakeholder Relationships

Stakeholders whose daily routine includes substantial time spent in or around day labor spaces often develop mutually beneficial relationships with jornaleros. Many
business owners for example, accept the presence of laborers near their businesses and even support the jornaleros in a number of ways. The owners and managers of convenience grocery stores throughout the region are particularly supportive of day labors congregating near their businesses. The laborers choose to wait near the convenience stores starting early in the morning because the stores are common stops for construction crews picking up inexpensive food, coffee, and other sundries at the start of their workday. Congregating near these stores places laborers in the path of travel for their most important potential employers. Convenience store owners and managers like having laborers near their stores for two reasons. The first is that laborers are quite consistent and loyal customers themselves. The second is that laborers may attract other customers to a particular store and thereby improve that business’ fortunes. Most convenience store owners acknowledge that the jornaleros’ presence may intimidate some customers, but none that I spoke with believed the total loss of business was particularly significant. Two store owners even argued that the laborers attracted customers to their store rather than others, and viewed the presence of day laborers as a means of differentiating their store from others like it (personal communications 2006-2011).

Jornaleros’ role as regular customers of the stores they congregate near to alters their relationship with those businesses in important ways. Some convenience stores in the region stock special products for the laborers, which vary depending on the particular types of laborers who visit the site each day. For example, the laborers who wait at the canyon adjacent site shown in Figure 6-3 are regular customers of
the convenience store located at the west end of the building in the center of the image. The grocery stocks a number of products that are popular among the predominantly Hispanic laborers who visit the store daily. Some of these goods are stereotypical Hispanic foods: a variety of tortillas and hot sauces, canned foods (soup and beans are most popular)\(^2\). Other products, such as long-distance phone cards, are commonly found in immigrant neighborhoods; they are not ethnically specific. The store also carries a number of products that laborers demand as a result of their relative poverty and the fact that most of the laborers at the site reside in area canyons (packages of ramen noodle soup; waterproof matches; extremely inexpensive hats, gloves and socks; soap, shampoo and other toiletries). By providing goods that the laborers need and want, the convenience store increases its daily receipts and changes the nature of the day labor space. The site ceases to be a place exclusively for employment and socializing between laborers. It becomes a space of mutual benefit, if not dependence, for the jornaleros and the business alike. When the relationships between jornaleros and nearby stakeholders are based on reciprocity and respect it allows for more productive discussions of how to best manage activities in the day labor space. For example, the convenience store in Figure 6-3 provides a portable toilet that is freely accessible to both laborers, and other customers in immediate biological need. Nate, the owner of this particular convenience store, explained his decision to pay for the toilet as both “good for

\(^2\) most of the canned goods have “pop-top” lids, so they do not require any additional tools to access the contents.
business” and an effort to “keep the peace” with the businesses with whom he shares a building and parking lot.

“Eh, those guys have been waiting for work here longer than I’ve been here. Someone told me like 30 years, but I don’t know. They (laborers) don’t get in the way much and they buy stuff from me… I don’t have a public toilet inside the store, so the one out back is for all my customers. That way they don’t bother the folks at the café.”

(Personal Communication, 6/18/2011)

It is also important to acknowledge that the management strategy that Nate uses, providing bathroom access for laborers as part of his business plan, would not necessarily be appropriate or equally effective in other day labor spaces. To be clear, establishing access to toilets for laborers is a critical step in avoiding conflict related to day labor activity. And Nate is not the only shopkeeper in the region to provide bathroom access for laborers (See Figure 6-6)
However, in San Diego County, many canyon-adjacent day labor spaces are not connected to stores where this type of mutually beneficial relationship could be established. The geographic situation of these sites varies, one is in a predominantly residential area, one is located at an intersection that is convenient to both on and off-ramps for the highway, but not near any commercial establishments; yet another site is adjacent to several tomato farms. In each case, establishing access to a toilet would benefit the laborers and reduce the potential for conflict. The logistics of establishing toilet access at each site requires a place-based approach that is sensitive to the unique dynamics in each day labor space.
There is considerable risk in presenting qualitative data from day labor spaces and drawing fixed conclusions. This is especially true in representing the social dynamics between laborers and stakeholders because they are constantly being (re)produced, and also because it requires the use of a rather homogeneous definition of “laborers” as well. In some cases, there can be affective bonds formed between individual laborers and stakeholders, or particular groups of laborers and stakeholders that do not extend to all laborers. Different groups within the day labor population use day labor spaces to meet their particular needs, which can lead to tension between groups of laborers, but can also generate new affective bonds of reciprocity between particular groups of laborers and nearby stakeholders.

The Pacific Beach Employment Center was a formal hiring site located in the Pacific Beach (PB) neighborhood of San Diego established in 1995 and open for 14 years, before it formally ceased operation in 2009. The particularities of geographic site and situation at this site produced one of the most unique day labor spaces in the region. The laborers who frequented the PB Employment Center were among the most racially diverse of any hiring site in the region. The PB employment center’s records from March 2006 show that 223 of the 746 of the men who registered at the center were non-Hispanic white or black. I returned to the site regularly from 2007 to 2010, and observed no significant variation in the demographic makeup of the laborers at the center until 2009, when it officially ceased operation. The diversity

\[24\] An informal day labor space still exists in this location today – though considerably fewer laborers use the site than did while the Employment Center was operating. For an in-depth examination of the micro-geographies of this site see Crotty and Bosco (2008).
within the PB center’s labor population is the result of two factors. The first is the site’s relationship with the San Diego housing commission. Residents of public housing were informed of the site’s existence and almost all of the African-American laborers who used the site lived in public housing downtown. These men travelled from downtown San Diego to Pacific Beach each day to look for work. Their long commute was justified by the fact that they could document their attempts to find work at the center, which was a stipulation for continued residence in subsidized housing. The second factor that added diversity to the laborer population in Pacific Beach is the center’s situation adjacent to an undeveloped portion of Rose Canyon (See figure 6-7).
Figure 6-7: Overhead view of rose Canyon near I-5. Homeless laborers often camp in the space marked in yellow.

A large population of homeless urban-campers lives in the canyon, most of whom are white. The prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse among the homeless populations in Rose Canyon is quite severe; nearly all the residents were habitual users of methamphetamine, crack cocaine, or heroin. The laborers who live in the canyon also made use of the employment center; primarily as a safe space to occupy during the day, and secondarily as a place to find short-term work (Crotty 2007; Crotty and Bosco 2008). Through my field observations, I was able to ascertain that the canyon residents were the primary source of conflicts at the site and that their
(mis)behaviors served as the foundation for a racial stereotype connected to drug use and criminality held by many employers who hired help at the employment center. At the PB Employment Center, the primarily black laborers who commuted from subsidized housing in downtown to the center, the primarily white residents of Rose Canyon, and the predominantly Hispanic laborers each used the site in slightly different ways. The actions taken by each group to meet their own needs led to segmentation along primarily racial lines within the day labor population at the site. Each group’s relationship with nearby stakeholders was also related to the ways they used the day labor space to meet their needs. Therefore some laborers’ relationships with nearby stakeholders were more productive than others. During my observations at the site in 2006, one of the key stakeholders was Meghan\textsuperscript{25}: a 24 year old white woman who was the owner and sole employee of a small, drive-through coffee hut located directly adjacent to the hiring site. (Figure 6-8)

\textsuperscript{25} Meghan is a self-selected pseudonym.
Meghan’s coffee hut was open from 5:30 AM to 12 PM each day, which meant that her businesses’ hours of operation overlapped with the highest activity period at the day labor site. Meghan viewed the white homeless laborers who live in Rose Canyon as the greatest threat to her safety. The campers tend to arrive at the site quite early, and, on several occasions, Meghan was harassed and intimidated by aggressive white laborers before the employment center opened. In response, Meghan used several unique strategies to control space and ensure her own safety in the process. Her initial action to ensure her safety in the early morning was to have her boyfriend hang out at the coffee hut until he had to leave for his own job. Over time, Meghan’s relationships with other (mostly Hispanic) laborers progressed such that she was comfortable with them providing her security early in the morning. The
laborers with whom Meghan developed friendships often extended their informal control of space beyond the boundaries of the employment center and onto her property. They helped to protect her from aggressive laborers, and helped to keep the area surrounding her shop clean as well. In return, she would provide free coffee, food, and conversation for the men who informally secured her business and person. Under different circumstances, the gendered fear that Meghan experienced as a result of the white laborers harassing her might have led to a more serious conflict. However, Meghan managed to find a workable solution to the conflict; the solution was not perfect, it simultaneously reinforced gender roles (with the young woman depending on a group of men for protection) and pre-existing racial divisions among the day laboring population. However, the sort of mutually advantageous relationship that Meghan developed with the Hispanic laborers at the site provides a reasonable standard for jornaleros and other stakeholders to aspire toward in their interactions and negotiations for space. The relationship Meghan established with the laborers also serves as an example of alternative ways that jornaleros produce space in their daily activities. The challenge at the Pacific Beach Employment Center and sites like it is reducing the importance of divisions within the day laboring population.

6.5 Alternative Uses and Self-Regulation in Day Labor Spaces

An unfortunate aspect of research that examines day labor conflict specifically is that it tends to over-state the occurrence of conflict and the role of negative social
interactions in the negotiation of day labor spaces. In reality, the vast majority of social interactions in day labor spaces are positive. In my capacity as an academic consultant for a number of community groups in the San Diego area, I was asked to take volunteers on educational outreach visits to informal day labor sites. Most of the volunteers held expectations regarding the emotional exchanges they would have at day labor sites, and many were surprised by the happy, social atmosphere. This is not to argue that jornaleros lead easy lives, but rather that they demonstrate an admirable collective ability to find joy under challenging circumstances. Day labor spaces play an important role in the collective psychology of jornaleros because, first and foremost, day labor hiring sites are spaces of socialization. Laborers congregate at sites every day in hopes of finding work; however the nature of day labor employment provides ample time for socializing among laborers and with community members who regularly pass through day labor spaces as well. Laborers are quite active in reworking spaces for their purposes, which are not exclusively related to finding work.

At the site depicted in Figure 6-1, laborers have extended the day labor space into an adjacent parking lot, which they use primarily for social activities while they wait for employers. The rear edge of the parking lot is lined by a short concrete wall that the jornaleros use as a backstop for handball games. The laborers sometimes play small-sided soccer games on the edges of the lot when customer traffic is low and the parking lot is empty. The laborers at this particular hiring site are somewhat unique because the surrounding businesses overwhelmingly approve of the
jornaleros’ presence. Neither the grocery store, bank, or paint store that are adjacent to the site have sought to remove laborers from the area, and have acted on the laborers’ behalf in at least on instance. The Wells Fargo branch located on the southwest corner of El Cajon Blvd and 33rd Street employs a private security guard to patrol the parking lot and protect the safety of its customers. According to a number of laborers and an employee of the bank, in 2008 the security guard assigned to the building was hyper-aggressive with jornaleros in his efforts to control activities in the bank parking lot. After a number of customer complaints, the bank demanded that his company assign a new security guard who was more sensitive to the social dynamics in the neighborhood. That event is noteworthy as a material and financial action by this branch to maintain the long-standing informal arrangements regarding the use of space in the area (Fieldnotes 07/22/2011). The affective relationships between the nearby businesses and day laborers are more evident in simple interactions that take place everyday in and around the day labor space. Employees of the grocery store often stop and socialize with the jornaleros on their way to work. The younger laborers sometimes flirt with female employees, who, more often than not, flirt back. Employees of the Frazee Paint similarly stop and chat with jornaleros – though their conversations tend to be more professionally-focused than do the interactions between jornaleros and Pancho Villa Grocery’s employees. In neighborhoods where local businesses and local residents view laborers as a problem, as was the case at the Encinitas Home Depot (Figure 6-5), jornaleros are
often less assertive in their control of space and playful behaviors in day labor spaces (Fieldnotes 2008-2010).

The degree to which day labor spaces are used for playful activities, is related to the construction of place, and where laborers as individuals understand their position in relation to other actors. Therefore laborers “with papers” may be bolder in their methods of attracting attention – both for finding employment, and socially. Similarly, undocumented day laborers may feel greater freedom to draw attention in neighborhoods where the residents are demographically similar to themselves. It is through these interactions that laborers develop social and economic networks, informally organize the day labor space, and enforce behavioral norms for each hiring site.

6.5.1 Microcultures of Day-Labor Encounter Spaces

Each day labor site can be understood as an ‘encounter space:” or the space where most personal and group interactions take place (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001). The regularity of interactions in encounter spaces collectively establishes the rhythms of the city and, in the case of interactions between laborers, employers and local stakeholders, produces day labor space (Amin and Thrift 2002; Massey 2005). The nature of day labor space varies between sites, and is constantly being produced through new interactions and engagements. Norms for spatial organization and acceptable behaviors are part of the ‘microculture’ of each particular hiring site (Wulff 1995, 65). Day labor spaces serve both economic and social needs. The
microculture of each site must serve both needs simultaneously. The norms of behavior and socio-spatial organization at day labor sites are constantly being reworked, remade, and redefined. The consistency of daily happenings at each site is the result of considerable informal policing of behaviors deemed inappropriate at a particular site. In most cases this means that longer-tenured laborers (or other stakeholders familiar with the space) alert newer, or misbehaving, laborers when their behaviors violate the informal “rules” for each site.

The microcultures of day labor spaces develop through particular forms of spatial organization. At sites throughout San Diego County, laborers congregate in groups of three to five men while they wait for employers to arrive. These small groups are ideal for socialization, and also improve the groups’ employment opportunities. Through regular conversations the small groups of laborers develop stronger friendships and affective bonds with particular laborers. These social bonds improve each laborer’s employment opportunities because they establish a foundation for recommendations during the rapid employment negotiations for day labor work. The best jobs for day laborers tend to require more than one laborer. When one member of a group is hired, he often recommends other members of the group to fill remaining positions (Fieldnotes 2006-2011).

The small groups jornaleros establish often follow racial, ethnic, or class-based divisions. For laborers who speak different languages this is not so surprising; socialization is difficult when members of a group do not share a common language. The self-segregation that takes place at sites of every type in San Diego is more often
caused by less obvious processes. In some cases, the divisions between laborers are the result of geographic or structural factors, as was the case at the Pacific Beach Employment Center where three distinct groups of laborers used the day labor space to somewhat different purpose. In other cases, divisions are the result of differences in access to particular resources. At the day labor space depicted in figure 6-4, there are significant demographic differences between the laborers who congregate in the area marked B and those who congregate in area C. The group in area B are almost entirely undocumented immigrants from Central America. Due to their lack of legal residence and corresponding fear of deportation, these men are motivated to avoid public attention to a much greater degree than are the Hispanic-American jornaleros who congregate in area C. The jornaleros who wait for work in area C are all legal residents of the United States, and have access to more resources (e.g. automobiles, stable housing, and government assistance) than do the Central American jornaleros who wait for work just across the interstate. The divisions within the day laboring population at this site demonstrate the importance of different types of resources in negotiations for space, and in particular, how structural resources like citizenship affect the ways that groups of laborers engage with and produce day labor spaces. At this site, like many others, the social divisions along racial, ethnic, class, and documentation status that exist within the day labor population are mediated by social and geographic situation. Each laborer’s engagement with the day labor space is the product of an ongoing intersection of processes entangled across space. Urban form and social stratification change more slowly than other aspects of jornalero’s
lives, so cleavages within the population occur along the more intractable lines of division within the broader society. More simply, the markers of identity along which jornaleros tend to organize are produced in relation to the production of day labor spaces themselves.

This is not the case at the day labor space shown in Figure 6-9. This space includes the formal hiring center known as *Confia en Ti* and an informal hiring site that operates along the length of North Quince Drive, between West Mission Avenue and West Washington Avenue. *Confia en Ti*, the formal workers center, is managed by a young Mexican man named Diego. As a result of perceived discrimination by Mexicans against people from other Central American countries, none of the jornaleros of Central American nationality will use the formal hiring site – even forgoing the free breakfast offered six days a week. To be clear, these laborers have not experienced discrimination from Diego or any of the other employees at *Confia en Ti*. Rather, the predominantly Guatemalan men who wait for work along North Quince refuse to take assistance, advice, or instruction from someone of Mexican descent. Diego explained the challenge in this way.

“I try to get them to come into the center so I can help them, so they don’t get in trouble with the police or ICE, but they never will come in. They always say: ‘We’re not in Mexico anymore, you can’t tell me what to do here!’” (Personal Communication 7/21/2010).
Figure 6-9: Quince Street informal hiring sites. The informal site is a suburban-commercial-hub, where informal economic activity dates back to the Bracero Program. Confia en Ti, a formal workers center, is located on the northeast corner of Quince St and W. Washington, neat the bottom of the picture. The areas marked in blue indicate the primary informal congregation areas.

In this case, the division between groups of laborers is not the result of their current social or economic situation. Both groups of laborers are largely undocumented and very few of the Mexican or Guatemalan jornaleros at this site are homeless. They face similar challenges and use the day labor space for similar purpose. The divisions are a direct result of ethnic or nationalist animosity. This case is quite rare however; men of Mexican, Guatemalan, Honduran, and El Salvadoran
nationalities share day labor spaces in many other areas throughout the region quite amicably. Based on Diego’s experiences and my own conversations with the Guatemalan laborers on Quince Street, it appears that the authority structure that exists at the formal center generates this ethnic and spatial divide. Guatemalans’ do not oppose the authority structures of the formal center in principle. They simply refuse to be put in a position in which someone of Mexican heritage has authority over them (Fieldnotes 7/2010). Informal day labor sites have no formal or legal authority structure, so laborers have equal opportunity to establish authority through social interactions, employment history/reputation, and length of tenure at a particular site (Crotty and Bosco 2008; Turnovsky 2006). Employers do not discriminate based on nationality, therefore the Central American laborers’ spatial strategy is to forgo some immediate benefits (food and protection from police and border patrol being the most significant) to ensure equal employment opportunity. Social divisions like the one that exists on Quince Street are uncomfortable and diminish laborers’ ability to organize to improve their daily experience, but are not a direct threat to the continued existence of a day labor space. That is not the case at sites where drug and alcohol use become part of the microculture of the day labor space.
6.5.2 Naughty Spaces: Informal Regulation of Alcohol Consumption and other Deviant Behaviors

There is one important exception to the typical interactions and self-policing that goes on in day labor spaces. When geographic site and situational characteristics make it convenient for sectors of the homeless population suffering from drug and alcohol addiction to also occupy day labor spaces, the interactions between jornaleros who are actively seeking employment and groups using the spaces for other purposes can be quite intense, even dangerous on occasion. Drug and alcohol addiction among homeless populations is a significant problem; one that has increased under neoliberal reforms that shifted funding from treatment programs to law enforcement and incarceration (Dear and Wolch 1987; Hartwell 2003). This shift in funding priorities coupled with legal restrictions on public space activities has all but eliminated safe places for the addicted-poor to occupy, much less live (Low and Smith 2006; Mitchell 2003). Because police agencies are reticent to bother men looking for work who do not pose a criminal threat, day labor spaces are attractive for homeless individuals looking to avoid police attention. Therefore, the contradictory position that day labor occupies within neoliberal ideology actually provides a degree of protection from the harsh policing of public space in contemporary American cities for homeless populations dealing with addiction issues (Crotty and Bosco 2008; Herbert 1997).

The tension I observed between ‘regular’ day laborers and the homeless in San Diego County is not unique to the region. The antagonistic relationship between the...
groups is reflected in the definition of “day laborer” used by the Day Labor Research Institute: “men who wait on corners to wait for temporary, short term, long-term, or full-time work. Unemployed workers seeking work by other means are not day laborers (although they may work temporary jobs through agencies or personal contacts), nor are homeless who stand in the same area as day laborers (but are not seeking work) (http://daylaborinfo.org/faq.aspx, emphasis added). In practice these distinctions are unclear at best, and change temporally depending on the needs of individuals using the day labor space at particular times. A great many of the day laborers in the San Diego region are homeless, not just the small minority that fit neatly into normative stereotypes about urban homelessness in the United States. Nearly all of the day laborers at canyon-adjacent sites are homeless. The physical geography of San Diego is fairly rugged and undeveloped canyon spaces are found even in fairly urban parts of the city. As such, even at urban-informal-connected sites, a sizeable number of the laborers are likely to be homeless and squatting in area canyons. The number of canyon-squatting laborers at urban-informal-connected sites increased considerably as a result of the economic downturn (Fieldnotes 2010-2011).

At the regional scale, these problems cannot be understood in purely racial or ethnic terms, as was the case at the Pacific Beach Employment Center (Crotty and Bosco 2008). The problems of heavy drinking are not limited to white or black day laborers. Social drinking practices among rural and migrant Hispanic men are an issue “on both sides of the border” (Perez 2006, 247). Among migrant day laborers
at canyon-adjacent sites, jornaleros often share a beer together at the site before returning to their campsites each evening. This practice is not an indication of addiction issue; however, the public nature of the drinking can draw undesired attention to day labor spaces. Across sites of all types behaviors that attract negative attention from the public or nearby stakeholders generate the most severe conflicts among laborers: littering, public urination, and visible drinking or drug use most of all. How laborers manage these issues varies depending on the micro-culture of the site, which is shaped in no small part by the neighborhood and landscape in which the site is located.

In my observations at hiring sites throughout San Diego County, I found there were two sites where alcohol use is a part of the daily routine for a portion of the day laborers: Kettner Avenue in the Point Loma neighborhood, and an informal hiring site located on Damon Avenue in Pacific Beach – the same street as the PB Employment Center. Point Loma and Pacific Beach are located reasonably near to each other and share several common characteristics that distinguish them from other (sub)urban areas in the region. They are both beach communities located in the central part of the metropolitan area. A sizeable percentage of the residents in both neighborhoods are young, and the commercial geography of both neighborhoods reflects that; there are a disproportionate number of bars in both areas. Point Loma is home to a number of military facilities including the San Diego Naval Submarine Base, the Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Offices, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and a U.S. Coast Guard Base. As a result, there is a remarkable concentration of strip
clubs and other shops catering to the wants and needs of the predominantly male
enlistees. The most conspicuous difference between Point Loma and Pacific Beach,
and other suburban areas is the presence of a visible homeless population in both
neighborhoods. Despite the relatively affluent residential populations in both
neighborhoods, poverty and homelessness have been, and continue to be, a
significant and visible part of the landscape (see figure 6-10). Local residents may
not like the visible markers of poverty in their neighborhood, but they accept them as
part of life in their chosen ‘lifestyle zone’ (Ford 2005). Day labor sites hardly stand
out in a landscape where homelessness is hyper-visible and vice comprises a
significant portion of the local economy. In this context, the norms of acceptable
behavior in day labor spaces are considerably less conservative than in other
neighborhoods.
Informal day labor activity was common on Damon Avenue throughout the fieldwork for this project, but the demographics of the laborers using the space changed considerably after the Pacific Beach Employment Center closed in 2009. Without the formal center there was considerably less incentive for the African-American and Latino laborers to continue using the site. The remaining laborers are nearly all residents of Rose Canyon, a marginal space known for drug and alcohol abuse (Crotty and Bosco 2008). At this site drug and alcohol use is hidden, though the effects of drug and alcohol intoxication are often quite noticeable among those
waiting along Damon Avenue, particularly in the late afternoon (Fieldnotes 2009-2010).

During my fieldwork at the Kettner Avenue hiring site, I observed between ten and twenty percent of the laborers drinking alcohol while they waited for work. Despite the prevalence of alcohol use at the site, laborers at the site still enforce limits on acceptable behavior however. The norms of behavior here have to do with the public visibility of the consumption. Most laborers mask their drinking in one way or another\(^ {26} \), so the standard for acceptable behavior is violated when someone drinks straight from his can or bottle – such that a passerby could be sure that he was drinking alcohol and not coffee, soda, or another less-intoxicating substance. Public use of marijuana is less common than alcohol consumption at this site, but it does occur with some frequency. Laborers share responsibility for regulating acceptable practices for marijuana use as well. Specifically, those who chose to use marijuana were discouraged from using particular smoking paraphernalia at the site. Hand-rolled marijuana cigarettes or “joints” are acceptable, as they appear identical to the hand-rolled cigarettes that many of the laborers smoke. Other smoking devices such as pipes, or improvised devices from cans or bottles are frowned upon (though I did see a Coca-Cola can used as a pipe on one occasion). Hard drugs such as methamphetamine, heroin, or crack-cocaine are not used publicly, though a few of the men who wait at the site do use them on occasion. From my observations it

\(^ {26} \) Drinking beer from opaque coffee cups is the most common method of masking public consumption. Some laborers would hide their beers behind the tires of cars along the street and periodically walk to their beer and take a sip.
appears that when laborers choose to use these harder drugs, they do so away from the hiring site. The laborers I spoke with, who admitted to using these sorts of drugs, also claimed to stay away from the hiring site while under the influence of hard drugs (Fieldnotes 06/2010). The variety of minor behavioral adjustments that laborers at the Kettner site make to reduce the visibility of intoxicating activities demonstrates a fairly nuanced understanding of tolerance for deviant behavior at the neighborhood level. By maintaining a standard of behavior that is less-problematic than other elements in the landscape, the laborers ensure their access to the day labor space – for whatever purposes they choose to use it.

One somewhat surprising use of the Kettner Avenue space is for alcohol and drug rehabilitation. For men dealing with addiction issues, it may seem counter-intuitive that a day labor site (particularly one where drugs and alcohol are regularly present) could serve as a space for both emotional and economic recovery. On my first visit to the Kettner Avenue site, I met a laborer in his early 40’s named John. John is originally from New York City, where he worked as a welder until he “got into trouble because of his drinking.” He moved to San Diego in August of 2001. For John, the move to San Diego was a life-altering experience. It was “right before 9/11, if I had still been there I’d probably have died.” According to John, he “straightened his life out” for nearly eight years. He was married and had a child. He had a job doing high-rise welding and belonged to a union. In 2008, the job he was working on was indefinitely put on hold because the developer ran out of money. John and his wife “hit a rough patch in their relationship” about the same time. That
confluence of events proved very difficult and John began drinking and using methamphetamine. His addiction cost him his marriage, his job, and recently, the legal right to see his son. John has been in and out of recovery for the past year. For him, day labor work is an entrée into potentially longer-term employment if he can stay away from drugs and alcohol. If he relapses, day labor work will still be an option. Day labor employment is based on what you appear to be able to do on a given day. Compared to jobs in the formal sector of the economy, day labor has very little memory. So the Kettner Avenue space is an important part of John’s financial recovery. It is also an important part of his emotional recovery and support network. John did not return to the site for several days after our first conversation. When he returned several of his friends at the site asked where he had been.

John: Tweakin’ for a few days.
Christopher: Well that’s the wrong answer. What happened?
John: I called to talk to my son and Diane wouldn’t put him on the phone. I got a skateboard for him.
Christopher: Sorry John. She can’t keep you away forever. You’re his father.

These sort of supportive exchanges and positive, affective relationships are an important part of John’s recovery. In his own words, “I don’t know where I’d be without these guys… probably dead.” (Fieldnotes 06/07/2009).

John is not alone in his use of day labor space for recovery. Laborers at the Kettner Avenue site and a number of others spend significant portions of their day reading pocket bibles provided at Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. Others discuss the amends they want to make with
friends and family. Day labor spaces provide an environment where laborers can establish and strengthen social connections and support networks. How they use those networks depends on their needs at a given time. Through these social processes day labor hiring sites are layered with emotional content which produces thick connections between jornaleros and particular day labor spaces (Bosco 2006). Those connections are particularly important for John, who believes that the day labor space on Kettner Avenue and the network of friends he built there are quite literally keeping him alive.

6.6 Conclusion

The rhythms of the city are immensely complicated in practice, but are quite representable when observed over time. The stability produced through routinized activity in place is critical for the production of particular types of day labor spaces. The ritualized, repetitive activities and social interactions imbues day labor spaces with affective meaning. Jornaleros and other nearby stakeholders come to depend on day labor spaces in various ways, and take actions to maintain access to specific day labor spaces. Examining day labor spaces from this perspective provides insights regarding the role of governmentality practices on day laborers’ locational selection processes. The findings in this chapter provide nuance for the means by which governmentality practices produce material outcomes in place. These findings are not meant to undermine the important contributions to understanding how social control is exercised in contemporary society made by governmentality scholars in
the past 20 years (Foucault 1991; Hiemstra 2010; Larner 2000). Rather the example of day laborers’ collective employment of strategic visibility is intended to highlight the ways that traditionally marginalized group like day laborers, can and do defy stereotypes about themselves. Heimstra’s powerful articulation of the effects of the neoliberal discourse of immigrant “illegality” provides an example of governmentality limiting residents’ freedoms at the regional and state scale (2010).

Yet there are undoubtedly examples of migrants who resist the constraining force of these narratives and create out spaces of resistance that serve their needs. In the case of day laborers, one could argue that day laborers practice of selective visibility is the result of their fear of deportation or arrest that could result from members of the general public reporting them to local policing agencies (Heimstra 2010). And there is no doubt that undocumented laborers would prefer to not be arrested or deported. However strategic visibility does not protect jornaleros from regular, if infrequent, raids by policing agencies in the region. Day labor sites are not secret, despite their situation in relatively less-visible locations. I asked nearly every laborer I spoke with to explain how he decided where he would look for work, and where he preferred to stand wait within the day labor space. In nearly six years of fieldwork, only one group of laborers voiced a basis for site selection that was related to anti-immigrant sentiment. The overwhelming majority cited a range of attributes that made a particular site attractive, most of which were related to immediate material concerns: the amount of work at a site, accessibility from the laborer’s residence, sufficient space for socializing, and social connections with other laborers at a site (Fieldwork
2006-2011). Strategic visibility is little more than the spatial logic that laborers collectively employ to maintain access to those material amenities that make life as a *jornalero* easier. Day laborers regulate the locations of, and acceptable behaviors at, informal hiring sites to maintain access to spaces that *work* for them (Massey 2006). Day labor activity is not an inherently political action. It is social, survivalist entrepreneurialism. However, as jornaleros employ strategic visibility, they exert their right to inhabit the city and create spaces that *work* for them. Their survival strategy can hardly be described as pure resistance, because *without organization*, day laborers facilitate their own exploitation as a low-cost labor source that strengthens the neoliberal economy. Few laborers that I met in the 5 years of fieldwork view their struggles through a political lens. Rather, their desires are articulated as hope for economic success and gaining respect from employers, other day laborers, and community stakeholders. Jennifer Gordon’s work with laborers and other migrant workers drew her to the concept of “rights talk” as a means of promoting collective action among jornaleros and other immigrant groups (Gordon 2005, 150-165). Rights talk is the combination of rights education to empower disenfranchised groups to assert their existing legal rights, use the language of rights to articulate their desires for a better life, and drive social change through social organization and collective action. Ideally, rights talk can form a discursive bridge between the ways that laborers in San Diego articulate their desires, which are based on respect and self-reliance, and the language of rights, which translates more directly into the realm of politics and social justice. Moreover, when laborers begin
to articulate their hopes for the future and frame the injustices they have experienced in the past in the language of rights, they no longer simply exert a right to exist. They exert a right to thrive. They demand their right to the city.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Review of the Project

In this dissertation project, I set out to investigate the geographic dimensions of day labor with one goal in mind: improving day-labor management in order to reduce or eliminate the community conflicts that sometimes occurred around day labor sites. Accomplishing this required a much deeper understanding of day-labor as an economic and a social practice than existed in academic research on the subject. Early research highlighted the importance of race, gender, and immigration discourses in day-labor conflicts. However, that research was almost entirely a-spatial, which rendered it impotent for planning purposes from my perspective. So providing a spatial perspective on day-labor markets was a major goal of this project, as evidenced by the analysis in chapter 2. I also endeavored to demonstrate the utility of geographic perspectives for understanding the operation of day labor markets at multiple scales, as well as the community dynamics that sometimes “boiled over” into more serious conflicts (Eisenstadt and Thorup 1994). In every chapter, the analysis demonstrated the diversity of day labor in San Diego County. Sites exist in a diversity of neighborhoods and landscapes. The day-labor population is diverse, bringing together immigrants, unemployed construction workers, and military veterans – each of whom uses day-labor spaces in slightly different ways. Day-labor activity also draws diverse reactions from area stakeholders, so while day-labor
conflict was the organizing principle for the research project, I also drew on fieldwork that highlighted the productive and positive relationships that can be produced through day labor activities.

Perhaps the most significant finding from this project is that day labor is an integral part of the social and economic fabric in the neighborhoods where jornaleros wait for work. T-test comparison show that the level of formal employment in construction and agriculture is significantly higher in day-labor neighborhoods than the rest of San Diego County. The number of owner-occupied homes is also higher-than-average in day-labor neighborhoods. So the sites are located where there is demand for jornaleros’ labor. Despite the informal nature of employment, day-labor sites are functionally-connected to the economies of day-labor neighborhoods; day laborers are integral parts of the communities where they wait for work.

Improved day-labor management also requires that day labor be treated independently from immigration issues at every political scale. Academic and public interest in day labor has grown substantially since this project began some seven years ago. Most of this interest is tied to national immigration debates. The considerable majority of day laborers are immigrants, and a smaller majority of the laborer population is undocumented immigrants. However, the conflicts that arise around day labor sites are not really about immigration so much as the laborers’ age, gender, race, and poverty. The findings presented in Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate the demographic variability that exists between and even within day labor hiring sites. The contemporary day-labor market in San Diego serves different purposes for
each laborer depending on his personal social and economic situation. The economic downturn produced substantial changes in the demographic makeup of the day-labor population in San Diego County. Most significantly, many undocumented immigrants left the region in search of better work and life prospects elsewhere. For remaining undocumented immigrants, day-labor spaces provide economic opportunities that are critical to their survival (though these rarely provide enough income to support families outside the region). For unemployed construction workers, day-labor spaces provide a continued connection to their career field, as well as opportunities to network for longer-term employment. For unemployed residents in a variety of fields, day-labor spaces act as a stop-gap between unemployment and homelessness. And for laborers of all backgrounds, day-labor spaces are places of socialization, support, and camaraderie in the face of difficult life circumstances. For immigrant laborers, separation from their families is a formidable emotional challenge. However, beyond that particular immigrant challenge (which is not limited to immigrant day-laborers) there is nothing about day-labor markets in-and-of-themselves that is specifically immigration-related. The existence of informal day-labor sites reflects a demand for labor that exists within a community, and should be dealt with as a local socio-economic issue, independent of the rhetoric and vitriol that plagues contemporary immigration debates in the United States (Chacon and Davis 2006; Massey et al. 2006). Successful day-labor management requires that local communities embrace the growing diversity in our county and country. It is also requires that communities prioritize social justice and
equity of opportunity. There is also mounting evidence that these priorities are essential to contemporary US cities’ economic growth (Florida 2003, 2005, 2008) as well as social justice goals (Pastor et al. 2000; Soja 2010). This means that communities who elect to use annihilation of space as a day-labor management strategy are wasting their limited financial resources in the short-term, as was clearly evidenced in Chapters 4 and 5, but also potentially hamstring their future economic opportunities by publicly demonstrating a lack of tolerance for diversity. This is not to argue that formalization is necessarily an appropriate solution for communities either. Each community must develop its own approach to day-labor management that accounts for the unique challenges presented by its geographic site and situation.

The findings of this research make clear the fact that the community dynamics that generate day-labor conflicts can, at the same time, be quite simple and almost excruciatingly complex. Simply put, day labor conflicts are locational conflicts. On a very practical level, they are simply contestations over who can or should control particular public spaces. They are but one way in which communities decide what activities are permissible in their public spaces. How communities collectively agree upon normative acceptable behaviors however, is quite complicated. The boundaries of community are socially produced by overlapping and entangled processes that operate across scales to produce specific outcomes in place. Chapter 4 highlights the contradictory nature of “community” within the context of neoliberal urban governance. In El Cajon, California, the community that motivated action against day laborers in the city had little relation to the actual activities of jornaleros at the
existing hiring site. Instead, residents’ fears that laborers would establish a hiring site connected to a new Home Depot location produced a crisis of legitimacy for the local government, and threatened the city’s fiscal health by placing the nearly $600,000 dollars in expected new tax revenue in jeopardy. For a city already struggling with a poor reputation within the region, this kind of socially-regressive action against its own residents (who are literally looking for employment) is myopically short-sighted. Interestingly, Home Depot Inc. learned from the situation in El Cajon rather quickly, and less than two years later, the company bussed in jornaleros and their supporters to refute negative stereotypes regarding day-laborers in City Council proceedings in Los Angeles. This action did not result in the Home Depot location being approved. It did force NIMBY groups to make their case against the siting decision without relying on regressive stereotypes, and prevented anti-day-labor actions by local police agencies. Therefore, the effects of the proposed Home Depot in Sunland-Tujunga were more just than was the case in El Cajon. These studies, placed in their appropriate temporal context, demonstrate the linkages between NIMBY conflicts across space, as well as corporate and neighborhood activists alike to adopt and adapt inclusionary and exclusionary discourses regarding the roll of day-laborers in their community in support of each group’s desired outcome. In both cases, the idea of community is wielded as a tool in a struggle over control of space – and tied to power-geometries embedded in each local context.

Chapter 6 demonstrated the considerable power of urban rhythms and the informal rules that structure nearly all activity in and around day-labor spaces. The
production of day labor space provides an example of resistance to neoliberalism on a number of fronts, and should serve as a reminder of the power of disempowered groups to produce spaces from which they can fight for better and more just future.

The day labor community, as a whole, in San Diego has not taken that second step. Laborers carve out spaces for survival, but in so doing, reinforce the economic structures that serve to disenfranchise them. Taking the step from survivalist entrepreneurialism, to collective action and organization is considerable and difficult. Understanding the emotional and affective connections that laborers have for day labor spaces is critical to improved planning and organization at the regional scale.

The implications of that chapter for day labor management are considerable. Provided a proper opportunity, jornaleros are quite capable of negotiating and developing productive relationships with other stakeholders. More simply, jornaleros are capable of managing themselves. It is my contention that, with specific types of community support, jornaleros are not only capable of “managing” themselves, but are also collectively capable of protecting themselves from workers’ rights abuses that plague the industry today. For this to happen will require networks of support, and the establishment of what I call the “networked day-labor collective.”

**7.2 Managing Day Labor Activity in the Contemporary United States**

In chapters 5 and 6 I showed some of the ways that effectiveness of day-labor management strategies are affected by the geographic situation of hiring sites. In
most cases, efforts to manage day labor though relocation fail, and day-laborers remain in the previously established day labor spaces. The two primary approaches to day labor management are equally insensitive to the ways that jornaleros select places to look for work, the social and emotional labor required to maintain access to preferred day labor spaces, and the intensity of laborers bonds with each other, area stakeholders, and the hiring sites themselves. It is time to rethink day labor management, indeed, even the term management is inappropriate. Management implies top-down, hierarchical control. To achieve social justice for jornaleros and maintain public safety, communities must support day laborers at informal hiring sites themselves. Support must be flexible and mobile to a degree, so that the minor infrastructure required to ensure a healthy environment (access to toilets and clean water) can be adapted or relocated if demand for labor at a site increases or decreases rapidly. Most importantly, responsibility for protecting social justice and promoting a healthy environment must be shared equally by laborers and other stakeholders.

Scholars in geography and other disciplines have posited a variety of visions for a more just (Hardt and Negri 2004; Soja 2010; Purcell 2003; Purcell 2008) and, in some cases, post-capitalist society (Harvey 2000; Gibson-Graham 2006). The articulations of social justice put forth by Soja (2010) and Purcell (2003, 2008) emphasize the importance of spatial awareness and equity of spatial access for achieving social justice goals within the capitalist system. However, both argue for policies that stand in direct contrast to central tenets of neoliberal capitalism; so, while neither argues for the overthrow of capitalism altogether, they do articulate
visions of capitalism that require a substantial ideological and policy shift. Gibson-Graham and Harvey, in contrast, argue for a reorganization of the social and economic realms that discards the capitalist system altogether. Gibson-Graham’s main argument in their extraordinary text *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006) argue that there are existing models of economic activity that subvert hegemonic discourses of capitalism and could be used to guide the postcapitalist era. Harvey takes this notion even further in the epilogue to *Spaces of Hope* (2000), in which he describes a fictional (though plausible) collapse of global capitalism and the subsequent reorganization that could take place. The ideas put forth by these authors are theoretical and utopian, but as Purcell has argued, the relationship between theory and practice “is a constantly developing dialogue” (Purcell 2008, 109) in which both sharpen each other. This is an important point, as theorists who refuse to ground their ideas empirically can reduce their efficacy in bringing about the changes the theorists advocate should come to pass. Similarly, activists who “see abstract theory as irrelevant to their cause” (Purcell 2008, 109) may miss opportunities for inspiration or even practical ideas that could improve the effectiveness of their activism.

The “networked day-labor collective” attempts to fundamentally redefine the relationship between jornaleros and the other inhabitants of the neighborhoods where they live and work. It is necessarily utopian, but it is informed by empirically-grounded research both from day labor studies (Camou 2002; Crotty and Bosco 2008; Esbenshade 2000; Fine 2005, 2006; Toma and Esbenshade 2001; Valenzuela 2006).
Jr. 2000, 2003b; Valenzuela Jr. et al. 2006; Varsanyi 2008a; Wakin 2008) and other disciplines. A number of literatures proved to be particularly important in the design of the networked day labor collective. In day labor studies, Michelle Camou (2002)’s work examining different types of formal workers centers and the ways that their ideological orientation affected their perspective on informal hiring sites in their area. Janice Fine’s work examining the role (and success) of community centers in promoting social justice issues in multiple contexts demonstrates the value of community centers for social and economic support services, which can include day labor, but need not be limited to serving the needs of day laborers.

The vision I describe below draws from the rich geographic literature on organizing labor (Castree et al. 2004; Herod 2001, 2003), and the importance of accounting for space and place in organizing efforts. The wealth of research examining the geographic dimensions of community were also quite influential (Ettlinger 2002, 2004, 2011; Herbert 2005; Martin 2003; Varsanyi 2005). Steve Herbert’s research on the challenges of neighborhood-based community development programs, and the all-important observation that there are large variations in capacities between neighborhoods, and those with the greatest needs are the least able to address them directly, influenced the decision that this support organization must operate at the regional scale, and move toward self-sufficiency quickly (Herbert 2005). Nancy Ettlinger’s research on community involvement and activism as motivated by difference or “outsider” identity, particularly in the suburban context, influenced the design of support services for the networked day
labor collective (2011). Finally, research by Fernando Bosco and Paul Routledge examining the emotional dimensions of social movements provide the empirical basis for organizing the networked day labor collective around existing hiring sites, in which laborers and stakeholders are already and continuously emotionally invested. (Bosco 2007a; Bosco 2001, 2006, 2007b; Routledge 2003, 2009, 2012).

To my knowledge, the collection of ideas below have not been suggested or implemented together, so as an amalgam of best-practices, informed by my own fieldwork, what follows is a suggestion for day labor policy to be implemented in San Diego County, and potentially other regions throughout the United States.

In the short term, I envision a network of day-labor support, in which community members throughout the region coordinate to ensure that jornaleros at every informal hiring site have access to clean water and a toilet. Jornaleros are responsible for keeping the day labor space clean, maintaining traffic safety during employment negotiations, and regulating site-specific behavioral standards. In the longer term, I envision jornaleros organizing at the regional scale, creating a networked day-labor collective, but support must be prioritized ahead of organizing efforts. Previous attempts to organize laborers with insufficient material support failed in metropolitan areas throughout the country (Camou 2002; Fine 2005, 2006). Without dependable support, competition, desperation, and need among day laborers will undermine efforts to organize jornaleros in the SDMA.

The first step in day-labor support is to coordinate among existing organizations with an interest in social justice and, in particular, day labor. This would include
faith-based organizations, non-profit groups like Interfaith Community Services, and local day-labor organizations like the Asociacion de Jornaleros de San Diego (AJSD) and *Confía en Ti*. AJSD is the only local day labor organization affiliated with the National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON). NDLON maintains a network of workers’ centers and day labor advocates throughout the United States, and their advice and counsel certainly helped AJSD to get up and running in San Diego.

NDLON does not provide material support for each group in its network (www.ndlon.org); however, so the connection to national scale organizing is not necessary in the short term for local groups who are interested in day labor support. These groups and their members are located throughout San Diego County, and support for particular sites should be provided by organizations or members who live or work near the sites. This may sound daunting at first, however, there are many groups already providing support at particular day labor sites. This first step simply requires coordination so that, for example, four different community groups do not drop off leftover food from their Memorial Day picnics at the same hiring site, on the same day (Fieldnotes 6/2/2012). That amount of food could have fed laborers at many more sites, but despite the honorable intentions of each group, most of the food was wasted thanks to a lack of coordination. The day-labor support network would establish regular contact dates and times for support. This would eliminate redundancies in outreach, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of community-based support. Well-coordinated support would allow jornaleros to plan their own consumption around support that they can depend on. Reliable support reduces
insecurity among the day labor population that often contributes to divisions and failure to adhere to site-based norms of behavior (particularly with regard to aggressiveness in employment negotiations). Once the support network is functioning, the next, and most important, step is establishing the Networked Day Labor Collective.

There is little question that formalization of space, and the establishment of workers’ centers has been the most effective mechanism for protecting jornaleros from human and workers’ rights violations; in some cases, workers’ centers can also draw laborers from the streets and into a more structured employment environment. Yet, the goals of organization in terms of social justice (i.e. protecting laborers from rights violations) do not necessarily demand the concentration of laborers in a single centralized hiring space. Moreover, jornaleros’ attachment to the places they look for work is strong, and attempting to relocate laborers has proven futile time and again. Annihilation of space is an expensive and ineffective use of resources. Worker’s centers are less-expensive, but are spatially static, which can limit their effectiveness not only from a day-labor management perspective, but as social-service providers as well. The Networked Day Labor Collective would draw from the best practices of existing management approaches, respects the affective connections and socio-spatial dynamics through which day labor space is produced, and should generate better outcomes for laborers and neighborhood stakeholders in terms of employment, safety and cost to the public. The collective would be organized as follows. Day labor organization would take place at existing hiring sites. Each site would establish
basic wage floors and norms of behavior (i.e. no whistling at female pedestrians, no drinking at the hiring site). The sites are then connected to the day-labor support network to identify jornaleros’ site-specific needs. The logistics of this support system and relationship would be flexible by necessity, but a basic model would require laborers to pay a nominal dues fee ($5/mo) which would be used for the most pressing needs of each site. For example, any site operating without consistent access to restroom facilities would need to arrange for portable toilets in discrete spaces nearby. Funds could also be raised for food and health outreach, which when predictable and guaranteed could lower individual desperation and inclination to work for wages below the collectively agreed-upon wage floor. For immigrant laborers, whose emotional concerns extend beyond the day labor site and across international borders, the collective would connect those jornaleros with NGO’s and government agencies to help with international health and hunger challenges facing their friends and families. Early on, it is important that jornaleros (and potentially their employers) fund as much of the cost for support as possible. Conflicting needs among support groups, and in particular, the distribution of credit for certain actions is a common cause of fragmentation within non-profit and community-organizations (Fine 2005, 2006). The basis for fragmentation is linked to the groups’ continual need to attract donations to support their operations. In order to justify those donations, each group works to demonstrate their effectiveness in addressing particular problems to donors. As a result, non-profits often compete against one another for credit and donations as they work toward similar goals (Fisher 2009).
Reducing the need for charitable contributions to support day-laborers is an important step toward stability in support delivery.

The networked day laborer collective also improves employment opportunities and conditions compared to any existing models for centralized formal workers centers. Centralized day-labor centers only increase employment opportunities at the workers’ center when a “union shop” model is adopted. Union shops require members to police informal hiring sites to prevent “scabs” from seeking work in other locations, which divides the labor supply and reduces bargaining power. Union members’ ability to act against “scabs” is limited by the members’ need to be physically present at the workers center to be hired. Therefore even workers collectives that are fairly aggressive in their efforts to eliminate street-side competition can only effectively control the spaces immediately surrounding their hiring hall. Their ability to control day-labor activity within a neighborhood, much less an entire region is doubtful. A labor collective organized through the network of existing day-labor sites is not constrained in the same way. Organizing the collective at existing sites extends the area of spatial influence of the union, facilitates recruitment, prevents wage floor variability between sites, and allows for informal regulation of labor conditions. Efficient communication between sites also can help laborers exert control of space by positioning members with specific social or legal capital at particular sites depending on the current social context. For example laborers with papers could be moved to a site where anti-day labor police actions are taking place. These laborers could exert their legal right to occupy public space
without fear of deportation as part of the “Safe Communities Acts.” Through coordinated spatial occupation, the laborer collective can maintain their presence in the spaces of their choosing, and protect the economic gravity of the hiring spaces.

The networked collective should be organized at the regional scale, and will therefore have a stake in day-labor-related politics in every municipality. The collective could organize to contest false narratives regarding day laborers in the public sphere, as was the case during the Home Depot approval battles in El Cajon. Even more critically, collective members without papers could be alerted to avoid a site with an active police action, thereby providing some measure of protection from deportation as a result of minor offenses like jaywalking or loitering.

The networked collective also improves relationships between the day labor population and the local non-laborer community. The collective should establish acceptable behaviors and activities at each site, which are then enforced informally by members at the sites. In the case of day laborers, the aversion to normalized behaviors appears to be most strongly vocalized by the academics who study labor, rather than the laborers themselves. The highest priority for all laborers is finding consistent employment at a fair wage, and laborers often informally regulate behavior at hiring sites to maximize their employment opportunities, independent of influence from academics or community organizers. This self-regulation occurs across all of the traditional social divisions of race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and gender. I have yet to encounter a laborer who viewed his right to a particular behavior that is commonly viewed as conflict-generating (whistling at female
pedestrians, drinking or urinating in public, or jaywalking to reach an employers’ vehicle) as more important than consistent employment. This is not to say that divisions do not exist among day labor populations, or that rights are unimportant in planning for and protecting day laborers. Divisions do exist, and rights are very important. My intention is to caution against the notion that the existing divisions are caused by laborers’ identity politics. Rather, cleavages within the day laborer population are the result of competition and systemic underemployment. In the contemporary (sub)urban day labor market each laborer acts to maximize his individual employment opportunities. Day laborers can improve their individual employment chances through social networking and (helping each other), but the advantage is diminished beyond the small group scale (3-10). The same processes of labor disempowerment that have helped to increase the size and importance of day labor activities in the United States, also creates a competitive atmosphere among laborers that inhibits large-scale organization from the outset, long before cultural and social difference could potentially undermine labor solidarity. Labor organization requires some adherence to social norms, but can hardly be considered a serious challenge to individual liberties, particularly among the most seriously disadvantaged sectors of the population. Maintaining solidarity among laborers therefore requires that they be insulated from the depths of economic desperation. The consistent provision of meals by the regional support network will ensure that is the case. Again, support must be prioritized ahead of traditional organizing.
Solidarity can also be established and supported through “rights talk.” Educating laborers about their legal rights and helping them frame their struggle in relation to human rights on a global scale can establish connections across traditional social divides of race, nationality, or legal status. When these bonds are created through rights talk, collective action is linked to the emotional geographies that affect each day labor space, and each jornalero individually. Previous research by Fernando Bosco demonstrated the power of emotional geographies for building solidarity and sustaining collective action among the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, a human rights organization in Argentina (Bosco 2007a; Bosco 2001, 2006, 2007b). The situation for day laborers is obviously different than the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, however, examining the way emotional geographies and networks connect people to, and across, space provides substantial insights to the actions and places that are most critical for each social movement. The Madres maintained solidarity by engaging in ritualized practices in squares throughout the world, so the practice linked the members emotionally across space. This was combined with collective practices that forged bonds between women, linked to place, but the strength of the bonds was the result of shared experience of loss. Laborers, by comparison, rarely change sites. They generate bonds that are almost entirely embedded in place. So the day labor space becomes a node in their personal emotional geography. The bonds they form connected to a particular day labor space can be weak or strong depending on the degree to which laborers interact, and cleavages that exist within the day labor population along lines of race, ethnicity, or documentation status. Furthermore, the
emotional geographies of day labor spaces extend outside the day labor population at each site and connect other area stakeholders with the site, and sometimes with particular laborers who use a site. Therefore, the emotional linkages that connect individuals to particular places are what make day labor spaces “work”. The continued existence of a site depends on a sufficient number of laborers and employers repeated engagement with the space over time. Conversely, for the Madres, places serve symbolic purpose, but it is the ritualized practices that connect members of the movement across space, that ensures the movements longevity.

The most serious issue faced in the context of day labor planning and organization is the apparent conflict between day-labor organization and laborers’ right to mobility, or right to space. This problem is eliminated within the networked workers collective, because laborers are allowed to seek employment at any hiring site of their choosing. In fact, informal day labor sites already occupy the best locations for day labor sites – as evidenced by their continual operation over the long-term. I see little practical basis for attempting to relocate day labor activity. Instead, sites should be connected to one another through networks that coordinate support services and information sharing (employment patterns at each site, names/license plates of employers who abuse or fail to pay their workers etc.). Each site should also continue informal enforcement of site-specific acceptable behaviors in order to maintain stability in established relationships with nearby stakeholders.

Stability of day labor spaces in terms of location and micro-cultures is an important aspect of a geographically aware approach to day labor management.
Through habitual occupation of the same spaces, day laborers become part of the background for the bystander public – a part of the landscape of everyday life – hardly more noticeable than the bus stops, buildings, trees, and signs that each person uses as unconscious markers of place and time in their daily routine. As part of the backdrop for daily experience, day labor spaces should draw attention when there is noticeable change at the site – a significant change in the number, demographic composition, or behavior of laborers, for example. The networked day labor collective provides an appropriate means of analyzing the cause of any rapid changes that take place. It also establishes a means of communicating information to area stakeholders in a respectful and coherent manner.

Finally, the networked day-labor collective would strive to be self-sustaining. Minimal dues payments would be one way to generate revenue to provide day-labor support. Another possibility would be small fees for employers who hire labor from any site where the collective operates. Those fees could be used to provide ID cards that give the laborer’s name, an individual union ID number, and list his skills (e.g. masonry, painting, plumbing). These ID cards would protect employers’ from hiring laborers who do not possess the skills required for a particular job, and provide a means of submitting a complaint about a laborer if he behaves poorly on a job.

The self-sustaining aspect of the networked day-labor collective frees local governments to focus on issues that affect a broader swath of society than day laborers alone. Lack of affordable housing and efficient public transit are the most critical issues for jornaleros. Moreover, these problems are produced through
regional or even international structures that cannot be effectively dealt with by local non-profit organizations. Within the neoliberal model, it is unlikely that any government will dedicate new revenue to social-services. I am cautiously optimistic about progressive action on these particular fronts, as support for them is increasingly folded into pro-growth business models that guide urban policy in the United States (Florida 2008).

The networked day-labor collective is necessarily utopian. Its success requires stability within neoliberal systems that produce instability by their very nature. Yet, utopian visions, like rights, are important because they provide a standard against which the justice of reality can be measured. For laborers, frankly, it would be difficult to produce a public sphere or daily experience that is more hostile than the one they already negotiate on a daily basis. I believe the networked day-labor collective is a realistic goal within the San Diego Metropolitan Area. If implemented properly, it could potentially reduce the social service burden and workload that various individuals and organizations currently dedicate to day-labor support. In other metropolitan areas throughout the United States, day-labor organization might need to take slightly different form. But regardless of the specific tactics used, Geography MUST be at the forefront of all day labor planning efforts. To paraphrase Emanuel Kant, Geography defines the conditions of possibility (Cited in Harvey 2009, 20). To ignore geography all-but-damns ones efforts to failure.
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Endnotes

i Data from California Employment Development Department (EDD)
http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/county/sdiego.htm

ii Pseudonyms are used for all research subjects in this chapter.

iii See Varsanyi (2008) for a more in-depth discussion of the legal challenges to day labor.

iv Though it is not the focus of this paper specifically, the assumption that all day laborers are undocumented immigrants has served to tie the approval processes for new Home Depot locations to the immigration debate at the national scale.

v It is interesting to note that if the laborers’ opinion had been sought out, they likely would have been opposed to the new Home Depot location. The new location would undoubtedly reduce the employer traffic at the Arnelle Ave location, which would be bad for their job prospects, and the new location was relatively inaccessible by public transit which most of the laborers were dependent upon.