Brad Plumer has a thoughtful posting about NIMBYism over at [WonkBlog](#). He points out that local opposition in Nebraska played a big role in getting the XL Pipeline delayed. More generally,

> Residents in Cape Cod have tangled up an offshore wind project for years, partly because it would obstruct scenic beach views. Solar farms in the Mojave Desert, backed by the big green groups, have met with fierce opposition from local environmentalists who worry that the plants could trample on fragile ecosystems. These aren't isolated incidents: Back in March, a Chamber of Commerce report found that 47 percent of some 351 energy projects thwarted in recent years have been renewable projects.

Another example is the successful delays of the bullet-train project by Palo Alto and Menlo Park, two of the most affluent communities in the Bay Area. And as another example of locality-based resistance, one might add the litigation by environmental justice advocates against the AB 32 trading scheme on the ground that it might adversely impact (or at least fail to reduce) pollution in disadvantaged communities.

Trying to figure out how to handle these issues is very difficult. But a first step, I think, would be to abandon the term NIMBY. By its nature, it blocks dialogue by denigrating the concerns of local residents. The NIMBY term also suggests that the best solution is to steamroll projects over the resistance of local residents. Even when that might be a tempting option, it's generally not practical.

It's true that local resistance may reflect a failure to acknowledge the greater good, placing self-interest over community welfare. But I would guess that resistance is more likely caused by fear (if only of falling property values) rather than greed. And those fears may or may not be unfounded.

I don't mean to say that local resistance is always well-motivated, and I certainly don't think it should always prevail. Indeed, in the case of clean energy projects, I think local interests may frequently need to give way to larger imperatives. But scoffing at the resistance of local communities won't help us make progress.

We need to think about the sources of resistance and how to respond constructively to legitimate concerns while minimizing obstruction from illegitimate ones. Naming calling won't help us do that.