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A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR APPALACHIA: ECONOMIC TRANSITION, COAL RECLAMATION COSTS, BOTTOM-UP POLICYMAKING (PART 1)

BY BETSY TAYLOR, MARY HUFFORD, AND KENDALL BILBREY

A key challenge of the twenty-first century will be to combine post-carbon economic transition with socioecological healing of the legacy damages concatenating from the fossil fuel era. What political and knowledge structures do we need to create integrated solutions to both of these challenges? In this paper, we draw lessons from grassroots social and environmental justice movements in Appalachia that seek post-coal economic transition. This article is in two parts. The first part analyzes participatory action research on regional economic transition conducted by the economic transition team of the Alliance for Appalachia (a regional coalition of sixteen grassroots organizations) from 2013 through 2015. Part 2 of this article looks at the Alliance's work from 2016 to the present (and will appear in a future issue of this journal).

We analyze post-extractive transition as a triple challenge to build (1) macrostructural support systems for re-localizing economies; (2) knowledge systems for complex socioecological reclamation of legacy costs; and (3) democratic governance structures open to diversifying economic and social interests. Grassroots citizen movements in Appalachia face a complex political ecological terrain that requires them to tackle these three tasks simultaneously. First, a post-coal economy is already springing up in

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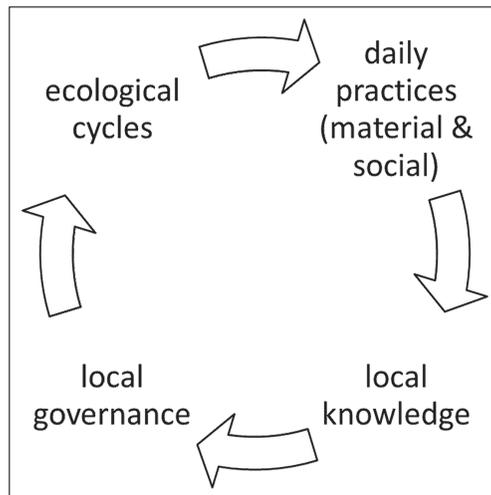
some areas, mostly in agriculture, forestry, artisanal production, and tourism (Chesky 2009; Haskell 2012; Kirby, Jackson, and Perrett 2007). Much of this draws on skills, folk knowledge, and cultural meanings emerging from livelihoods with roots in pre-coal social and moral economies, such as gardening, gathering, local music, and other forms of artisanal production (Black 2010; Hufford 1997; 2007). Civil society organizations (CSOs) can provide crucial support to these nascent local projects of economic relocation, but cross-sectoral support from government, specialized experts, and philanthropic and public funds are also crucial (Farley and Bush 2016; Holland 2016; Hufford and Taylor 2013; Lacy 2000; Taylor et al. 2014). Second, the environmental damage from over a century of coal mining is massive, but poorly documented (Palmer and Hondula 2014; Hufford 2014). We do not know how much money, expertise, and labor will be required to reclaim land and watersheds and clean up toxins. Legacy costs of coal are both an economic burden (Dixon and Bilbrey 2015) and a burden on knowledge systems, but reclamation work could also provide jobs and public revenues that could function like a “Green New Deal” or post-devastation Marshall Plan for the region. Third, the regional economy has been dependent on global energy markets for over a century, and its restructuring requires more than state governments seem able to provide at present. The legal powers and public revenues of the federal government seem essential. However, the relationships between local, state, and federal government are still deeply enmeshed in long-standing, crony patronage networks dominated by extractive industries (Burns 2007; Billings and Blee 2000).

Theoretical frameworks: Post fossil fuel transition, therefore, requires integrated transition in economic, knowledge, and governance structures. Much of the literature in ecological economics and the anthropology of climate change posits the need for forms of knowledge embedded in local cycles of ecology so that human awareness is directly tied to ecological feedback patterns (Berkes, Colding, and Folke 2000; Carpenter et al. 2001; Couzin 2007; Crate and Fedorov 2013; Johannes 1998; Naess 2013; Oliver-Smith 2016). Local knowledge is emphasized and is characterized by emergence from daily practices of work and social life, bodily experience, ecological and social contexts, and path-dependent historical contingencies (Brokensha, Warren, and Werner 1980; Chambers, Pacey, and Thrupp 1989). Theories about commons governance also emphasize local knowledge as intricately tied to ecological feedback mechanisms, material labor, and emergent and highly contextualized forms of resource management and human governance (Liu et al. 2007). In this article, following Reid and Taylor (2010), we call this kind of knowledge “participatory reason” (155–84). Literatures

on participatory action research highlight the democratizing powers of this kind of knowledge as it breaks down barriers between sectors (expert, government, civil society) (Fischer 2000). The collaborative research, analyzed in this article, draws deeply on an Appalachian “knowledge commons” that arises from a distinctive regional experience of bottom-up knowledge and policymaking (Puckett et al. 2012) characterized by participatory reason and democratic deliberation that breaks down barriers between local and expert knowledge.

However, in this paper we argue that participatory reason, while essential, is not enough. Post-carbon economic transition requires reclaiming forms of knowledge and power that are currently shaped by corporate-dominated governmental structures. A key feature of corporate power over government is the corporate veil that sequesters decision making away from democratic participation. Highly technical, confusing, and specialized jargon is key to excluding citizens (Reid and Taylor 2010). Issues that are holistically integrated when encountered through local knowledge are dismembered into multiple government agencies, each with their own specialized mandates and jargons (Wood 2013). Specialization and ontological dismemberment of complex realities is an inherent tendency in bureaucracies and academe. However, it is in the interstices between specialized topics and between scales of governance that corporate power has expanded (Reid and Taylor 2010). Bureaucratic and academic fragmentation of reality has created modular units of governance so that citizens must master multiple

Figure 1: Participatory reason.

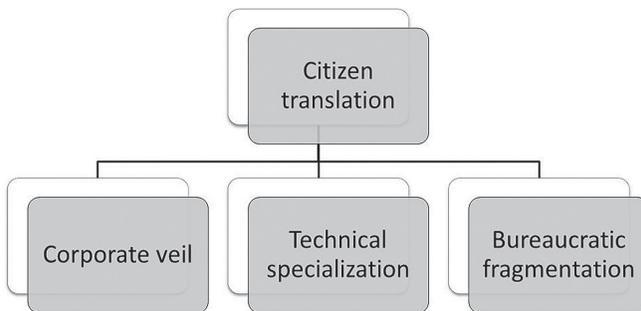


jargons to discuss complex problems that affect their communities. In addition, this fragmentation and modularization creates a political terrain in which the terms of political contestation are enframed and managed by multiple fragmented specializations, each of which contains one dismembered part of a complex socioecological problem. Citizens face a kind of shell game in which much-better-resourced political players move these enframed chunks around the table in hard-to-follow ways, appearing like a magic show in which the important moves are veiled from the audience.

To democratize and reclaim bureaucracy, citizens must develop forms of translational knowledge to gain access to key levers of knowledge, power, policy, and regulation. Paradoxically, democratizing economic transition movements must simultaneously disembed and dismember their participatory reasoning in order to develop new policy recommendations that can lay the groundwork for multisector, multistakeholder sharing of knowledge and power to create the open government, transparency, and accountability that are basic to democracy (Open Government Partnership 2011). We argue that the more local and variegated approaches appropriate to the ethnography of participatory reason need different research methods and stronger articulation with theories of the State (Chalfin et al. 2006; Das and Poole 2004; Edelman and Haugerud 2005; Fardon and Furniss 2002; Friedman 2003; Fuller and Beni 2009; Hansen and Stepputat 2009; Moore and Sanders 2003; Sharma and Gupta 2009; Spencer 2007; Trouillot et al. 2001) and the emerging field of ethnographic study of bureaucracy (Abram and Weszkalnys 2013; Bernstein and Mertz 2011; Feldman 2008; Westman 2013).

The Alliance for Appalachia in the history of Appalachian movement-building: Since the 1960s, Appalachia has had a distinctive history of social movements in which issues of environmental and social justice are entwined and place-based and in which participatory action research plays a central

Figure 2: Translational knowledge.



role in community organizing and consciousness-raising (Fisher 1993; Fisher and Smith 2012). Historically, community-based CSOs have lacked the capacity to maintain formal regional coalitions for long periods of time. But informal webs of regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing have long been important—such as the popular education work of the Highlander Center in eastern Tennessee (founded in 1932) and the leadership development and community solidarity engendered by labor movements (Smith 2015). Two periods of intense socioecological crisis have impelled community-based and state-based CSOs to form regional coalitions. In the mid-1970s, the influential but short-lived Appalachian Alliance formed in reaction to massive strip-mining and related flooding, as citizens realized that their problems crossed state borders and that only federal laws and regulation could offset the power of the coal industry over state governments (Montrie 2003). Also, in the mid-1970s, young scholars shaped by 1960s social movements were active in the formation of the Appalachian Studies Association (Berry, Obermiller, and Scott 2015). As a scholarly body, this association has been unusual in its consistent promotion of participatory and community-based methods of research, and its annual meetings are important regional-scale hubs for community participation, activist/academic networking, and public engagement.

In the early twenty-first century, a new coalition—the Alliance for Appalachia—arose in reaction to the dramatic increase in mountaintop removal mining (see <http://theallianceforappalachia.org>). This coalition of sixteen grassroots organizations initially focused on federal agencies, as it sought enforcement of federal laws such as the Clean Water Act through lobbying and lawsuits. In reaction, the coal industry put millions of dollars into a public relations and “Friends of Coal” faux grassroots campaign that opposes jobs vs. environment and ties the region’s cultural identity to coal, even as its coal and revenue production rapidly decline due to resource depletion (Bell and York 2010). This dualistic opposition of economy and ecology was offensive to key regional activists, many of whom were shaped by a rural working-class sensibility in which cultural and emotional ties to land and place weave together the stewardship of livelihoods and environment, in a commons environmentalism (Newfont 2012; Hufford 1997; Reid and Taylor 2010).

To balance the negative labors of resistance, the Alliance created an economic transition team to proactively build a vision of economic alternatives and to advocate for policy and action toward this vision. Membership on the team has varied from year to year, but there is a core group of about a dozen people who have participated since its founding in 2012. Member groups select representatives from their membership to participate on the economic transition team, and the team brings in people with relevant expertise as needed. The team usually meets biweekly by phone conference

and quarterly at the regional summits held by the steering committee of the Alliance. The team strongly emphasizes democracy and transparency in its organization practices. Alliance staff and volunteers maintain a digital commons where meeting notes and helpful materials are shared with members. The Alliance regularly trains staff and volunteers in democratic facilitation of meetings and anti-oppression and empowerment techniques.

The Economic Transition Team of the Alliance for Appalachia: In 2011 and 2012 the Alliance convened several forums in which activists from Central Appalachia discussed what a post-coal future could be, and strategies to get there. From these arose two participatory action research projects, which were conducted throughout 2013 (for more detail on these projects, see Taylor et al. 2014):

- “Listening Project” on successful economic transition projects within the region.
- “Agency Mapping Project” to scope government agencies that might help communities seeking a brighter future.

Methods: The Listening Project surveyed and interviewed people in Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina who are actively involved in economic transition projects, to learn what they see as ingredients of, and barriers to, success. This project used collaborative research methods that grew organically from the participatory democracy and transparency built into the organizational practices. After deciding to do a listening project, the team debated goals and research questions over several team meetings. Drawing on our past work and civic networks across five states, we identified forty-five organizations that were doing economic transition projects. We developed survey questions and circulated the survey by e-mail with some follow-up phone conversations. However, the response was not adequate, so we hired a researcher to travel in person for face-to-face interviews with leaders in seventeen grassroots groups (including economic development, environmental, labor, faith-based, energy policy, community organizing, local foods, and local media). We asked people about their vision of prosperity in Appalachia, successful projects, existing resources and barriers, what support systems they need, what existing state and federal policies are detrimental, and what existing or potential government policies would help.

Findings: A key finding of this work was that successful projects are burgeoning across the region. However, participants identified key areas in which they lack (a) crucial support systems such as knowledge sharing and training, funding, help in organizational capacity building, and so on; and (b) policy that is lacking, bad, poorly implemented, inaccessible, or arcane. In evaluation of multisectoral support systems, civil society organizations

were positively evaluated (especially in the areas of food, forestry, energy, and entrepreneurship), but governmental support was only positively evaluated in the area of tourism at the state level (see table 1). The projects identified in the Listening Project clearly demonstrated that there is a ferment of successful, local experimentation in post-coal economic development, but that they need more multisectoral support (government, CSO, and expert) and more appropriate, usable, and useful policy. The economic transition projects are diverse, but they seem to share key values of local, community-, and people-centered development and a vision that highlights issues of energy, land, training, transition, and a regional scale (in fig. 3, the words are sized according to their frequency of use in the interviews).

Table 1: Findings from Economic Transition Listening Project, 2013 (gray highlighting shows areas of most need)

Economic areas (seen as key to new economy)	Support system (govt., CSO, expert)	Policy environment
Local food and forestry	Excellent networks of CSO groups working on this Good academic and govt. support	Subsidies for large corporate farms that drive up land prices Farm bill = opportunity
Tourism (arts, culture, heritage, nature, other amenity-based)	Fairly good support from state govt. Not enough CSO networking	(Few people commented on relevant laws or policies here. Maybe need more research and education on this topic.)
Entrepreneurship, small business, cooperatives (and other kinds of economic democracy)	Lack of larger market access and start-up capital Lack of entrepreneurial skills, mind-set Mind-set of dependency on outside or large industry to provide jobs Good CSOs working on capacity-building and creation of cooperatives	(Few people commented on relevant laws or policies here. Maybe need more research and education on this topic.)
Energy	Good CSOs that provide education, capacity-building, research at regional scales State and federal govt. support = bad Lack of advertising of federal and state funding opportunities Need more support and funding for R&D of efficiency, small-scale (locally based) renewable energy sources such as micro-hydro damming	Inefficient and inaccessible federal filing processes for executing SHOP and Weatherization programs. A prohibition or lack of energy co-ops in WV Need to advocate for the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act (US House) and State Energy Race to the Top (US Senate)

Appalachian Agenda for Economic Transition: The Listening Project ended in December 2013 with a regional forum that brought together over sixty leading activists from six states for a two-day summit, which included discussion of the results, panels by practitioners of successful economic transition projects, and intensive crowd-storming sessions to clarify values and prioritize goals and strategies for the next action steps. The resulting document was called the Appalachian Agenda for Economic Transition. This crowd-sourced, bottom-up policy vision addressed the following:

- I. What policy should we try to move?
 - A. Existing
 1. Abandoned Mine Land Fund¹
 2. Reform of Appalachian Regional Commission to make decisions more participatory and give local communities more voice²
 - B. To be created
 1. Coal Settlement Fund: a federal fund that links cleanup of legacy costs from extractive industry with new job creation and post-coal economic transition³
 2. Economic Development through Water Cleanup
- II. Why a shared regional agenda?
 - A. A better state and federal response than single organizations can get alone
 - B. A sense of how the pieces of our work fit into a larger, shared direction
 - C. A succinct and clear case to make to members, funders, and so forth
 - D. The ability to better learn from one another through an ongoing process and to scale our work up
- III. What elements does it include?
 - A. A set of documents/guidances to define: Internal cohesion around transition to increase our capacity for shared work; external targeting of federal and state officials together to move power structures
 - B. A process with specific goals and outcomes or ongoing space for convening transition, coordination, and collaboration
 - C. For cross-group learning: A database of organizations, transition projects, local business models, and contacts; online knowledge exchanges and model-sharing; digital library of transition resources
- IV. How:
 - A. The document and process would be flexible, not static; include messages and points of engagement tailored to dif-

- ferent audiences, that is, federal agency/politician, national allies, local Appalachian groups; be geared toward alignment, not deep coordination; eventually be coupled with a communications and/or advocacy plan
- B. Document content could include values that guide the work, principles of alignment, declaration of vision, declarations or what are we working toward in specific terms (policy goals?), tools for local application/political education, outline of ongoing process and intentions
 - C. Pillars: good/active governance, youth participation, policy and practice, inclusive (urban, rural, class, gender, age, race, LGBT, geographic)
 - D. Messaging/what are frameworks that invite everyday people to have a stake?: community wealth, leadership development, community-driven, equitable prosperity, bright future, equity, healthy, diversification (not transition), local ownership, next-generation, self-reliance, family, security, community investment
 - E. How do we maintain effective relationships with federal officials?: Work together as a region, have regional platforms, show up as a group; tell staff what's important and why; let officials know what the opportunity is and what their obligation is; ask detailed questions based on up-to-date information of policymakers that show that we are informed and relevant players; give appointees feedback, appreciation, and hold them accountable—be in regular communication; set up follow-up meetings at each meeting

The group identified that much of the needed policy vision had already been written in earlier documents, including “Appalachia’s Bright Future” Conference proceedings by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), materials from the Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) initiative of the state of Kentucky, reports and multimedia from *Making Connections News* by Appalshop Multimedia in eastern Kentucky, a 2013 Union of Concerned Scientists report, a 2010 report by two Kentucky CSOs (Mountain Association for Community Economic Development [MACED] and KFTC), and the “Appalachian Transition Framework” from a network of private foundations collaborating in providing grants to the region.⁴

Challenges to implementing a bottom-up vision for economic transition: There seemed good cause for hope at the end of the December 2013 summit. Over several years, crowdsourcing and participatory research had created an impressive “knowledge commons” of existing or emerging

models ready to scale up regionally. The Agency Mapping project initiated some conversations with state and federal bureaucrats in the Department of the Interior, Department of Labor, national labor organizations, and—with less success—the Appalachian Regional Commission. The Alliance was developing mechanisms for self-education about concrete policy possibilities and the power landscape that a transition movement must traverse. Despite these achievements, momentum lulled for about six months. Key goals of the Appalachian Agenda were sidelined, such as a digital platform for knowledge and model sharing; mutual support systems for local economic transition projects; and a fleshed-out, holistic policy vision leading to a campaign of citizen lobbying at state and federal levels. On a small budget, it was hard to master and integrate the multiple technical and specialized fields of knowledge and policy that were scoped in 2013. In addition to capacity problems, there were organizational questions.

Taylor has argued that a “regional civic ecology” develops over time, in which CSOs’ roles are shaped by the distinctive political terrain of relationships that is laid down by distinctive regional histories of contestation between civil society organizations, the State, and various stakeholders (Taylor 2009, 832–33). The Alliance is an inter-state collaboration that primarily has served to link state organizations with federal advocacy efforts. After debate, it was decided that the niche for the economic transition team was to focus on identifying resources in federal agencies for economic transition work linked to legacy costs of coal mining. This led the economic transition toward a phase of specialized research into specific federal agencies, and away from building knowledge infrastructures for holistic and integrated regional knowledge-sharing between local efforts for a multi-issue vision.

In summer 2014, the economic transition team shifted away from the dream of building peer learning networks for action projects to support people doing economic transition. The team refocused on trying to open up political space within which federal and state bureaucracies would democratically listen to and include citizen voices and perspectives. In the Listening Project, every respondent gave top priority to democratizing the Appalachian Regional Commission. However, the team decided to start with the Abandoned Mine Land Fund, primarily because it has so much money.

Public Revenues, Public Wealth, and the Resource Curse in Appalachia

Unlike other developed countries, the United States does not have national sovereign wealth funds for extractive industry public revenues. Through an ironic twist of history, the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund

has become something like a sovereign wealth fund, albeit one that developed through congressional neglect.

The AML was established in 1977, by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) to create a pool of money that could be used to reclaim land and waters damaged by pre-1977 mining. Fees are levied on current coal mining, to fund clean-up of these legacy costs. Since its founding, the AML program has reclaimed over \$5.7 billion worth of AML problems—and nearly 800,000 acres of damaged land and water across the country (Dixon and Bilbrey 2015). However, Congress routinely has not fully disbursed AML funds, so money has gradually accumulated in the fund, which now has about \$2.5 billion.

The past two decades of scholarly research have demonstrated that sovereign wealth funds can be key factors in preventing or remediating a resource curse—or the “rich lands, poor people” syndrome in which vast wealth is extracted from the natural resources of a country, while people are impoverished and alternative development pathways wither (Eller 2008, 9–52). Recent literature suggests that resource curse patterns are the result of multiple causal factors that converge to create vicious cycles in which the volatility in the flow of revenues from extractive industry is linked to political patterns that do not produce prudent planning or public goods (especially education) that remediate structural problems arising from extractive industry, such as loss of land and quality of life, conflict, and displacement; dependency on extractive industry; depletion of resources; burdens on public revenues caused by reclamation; damage to infrastructure, health, and environment; and prevention of economic diversification, and so on (Collier and Goderis 2007; Frankel 2012; Mildner and Lauster 2011; Humphreys, Sachs, and Stiglitz 2007). Which specific causal factors are involved can vary from one time and place to another, but the cyclicity of extractive industries is key to resource curse patterns. But having well-designed and transparent public revenue structures is a powerful way to avoid or mitigate the resource curse because they can be used to smooth bust phases, in ways similar to Keynesian interventions in financial sector booms and busts. In addition, in countries like Norway, sovereign wealth funds have been pumped back into building public goods that support economic diversification as the oil depletes.

In the United States, some states have set up sovereign wealth funds (Boettner et al. 2012). They are more common in the western United States in regions with more recent extraction that have employed more sophisticated public revenue design. However, macrostructural patterns in investment, wealth, and capital accumulation in coal-affected Appalachian regions were laid down in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and have been very resistant to change. East Coast urban and international speculation

in coal and timber led to frenzied speculation in land. The resulting stark inequality in land ownership is still, a century later, one of the strongest economic causal factors in structuring the regional economy. The power of the coal industry over state government led to extremely low rates of taxation of land or coal production. The primary governmental revenues from coal are severance taxes that are gathered and spent annually by the states, so they amplify boom-and-bust patterns and flow almost entirely out of coal-producing counties (Bailey 2013; Boettner et al. 2012). The design of Appalachian public revenues is such that they increase, rather than mitigate, long-term resource curse patterns over the long run. A fundamental challenge of regional economic transition efforts is to find political leverage to shift these structural inequalities and poor design in ownership, investment, and wealth structures.

In shifting its focus to federal agencies, the economic transition team is attempting to create new civil society/State relationships that provide points of leverage for democratic input into decisions about land reclamation and post-mining land use and planning, and to claw back public revenues that have historically been extracted from the region or deployed along cronyistic networks of the corporate State. However, this goal requires specialized research, which can drain citizen energy and deflect from holistic, community-based vision, values, and action. This is the kind of research that can lead CSOs into becoming professionalized and specialized in ways that make them part of a distanced, fragmenting, technocratic policy system (Fischer 2000).

The Abandoned Mine Land Fund Research Project

Fortunately, as the economic transition team grappled with these challenges, an opportunity emerged from a new program by one of the member groups of the Alliance. In Summer 2014, the Highlander Research and Action Center in eastern Tennessee⁵ initiated an Appalachian Economic Transition Fellowship program, which provided a stipend for Appalachian youth to work with a citizen group for a year on an economic transition project. Kendall Bilbrey won a fellowship to work with the Economic Transition team for a year. To do the research on the Abandoned Mine Land Fund, the team partnered with the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center in eastern Kentucky (<http://appalachianlawcenter.org/>) where Eric Dixon was serving as an economic transition fellow. Both fellows had recently received their BA degree and did not want to be part of the brain drain from Appalachia. These two fellowships were devoted full-time to conducting in-depth research on the Abandoned Mine Land Fund. The AML program is remarkably complex, and it took a full year of intensive work to unravel its intricacies and to translate findings and recommendations into a format that would be usable and useful for citizens.

From summer 2014 to the publication of a detailed 172-page report (Dixon and Bilbrey 2015) in June 2015, the economic transition team, the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center (ACLC), and their two fellows developed a successful model for linking participatory and multistakeholder research with a highly specialized research topic. This is an example of the kind of "translational research" that we discussed above. Below is a brief description of the components of this model.

Methods: This project used a mix of collaborative, participatory, and more traditional scholarly research methods. First, the collaborators used their well-developed skills and practices for public engagement and deliberation. The partners did wide outreach to grassroots civil society organizations in affected communities, and solicited input through snowball methods through our grassroots activist networks and through civil society and scholarly Listservs and forums. In response to this outreach, we formed the AML Policy Priorities Group, which had over two hundred people, primarily from Central Appalachia but also including people from other regions (including community members, scholars, activists, organizers, lawyers, policy experts, regulatory officials, and more). This group has discussed research goals and findings in a continuous process through the following venues: four telephone conference calls between September 2014 and April 2015; two face-to-face, one-day summits (with fifty attendees in 2014, and thirty-five in 2015, from Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Washington, DC); and through monthly e-mail newsletters. In addition, Bilbrey and Dixon sought input from key government officials and attended AML-related multistakeholder meetings (the annual meetings of the National Association of the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, in September 2014, in Columbus, Ohio; the Pennsylvania Campaign Meeting convened by Pennsylvania Watershed groups in November 2014). Input from these diverse stakeholders clarified questions that were central to the design of this project.

Second, Dixon and Bilbrey conducted phone or face-to-face interviews with key government officials in the federal Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement, which had oversight over the AML program. They also interviewed officials in AML state programs in Central Appalachia. Third, Taylor, Dixon, and Bilbrey conducted a survey of twenty-eight states and tribal AML programs. Sixteen offices responded, to provide a uniquely detailed understanding of how programs are conducted, from the perspective of bureaucrats. This survey was conducted as an academic study, under IRB review approval from Virginia Tech. The research process had multiple forms of mentoring and review from the activists, scholars, and practitioners active in the partnering organization.

The model for "translational research" we developed is a hybrid of participatory action research and expert- or government-driven research.

Encountering significant resistance from government officials initially, the research process served both social and intellectual ends. In addition to generating important scholarly findings, this research model was key to forging new networks with state and federal AML officials. This building of government/citizen trust is an important but understudied domain in the social construction of knowledge. We have heard informally from several officials that they were surprised and impressed by the quality of the research. Demonstrating specialized expertise seems to be a way to gain respect from government agencies, although it takes a lot of citizen energy to achieve.

Throughout the citizen-controlled AML and the Agency Mapping research process, Taylor and Hufford served as scholarly advisors to provide information about methods, relevant literatures, and analysis, as needed.

New federal initiatives and emerging possibilities for a "Green New Deal" for Appalachia: In February 2015, President Obama's administration proposed the POWER+ Plan, which proposed to combine over \$300 million per year from multiple streams of federal funding (from Department of Labor, ARC, etc.) with over \$1 billion in AML funds to support economic diversification in Appalachia combined with jobs in reclamation, over a five-year period starting in 2016. There was striking congruence between the POWER+ Plan and the citizen vision emerging from the past several years of bottom-up policy visioning in Central Appalachia described above. Though it is hard to know how much the citizen action catalyzed the POWER+ vision, it is clear that the research projects described in this article were crucial in positioning the civil society networks to scale up advocacy for POWER+ and the other policy recommendations detailed in the AML report (Dixon and Bilbrey 2015). Drawing from the rich regional traditions in participatory reasoning, these highly collaborative projects produced stronger intellectual products than government or scholars could have produced on their own. Powerfully shaping the social construction of knowledge, the mix of participatory, collaborative, and translational research methods opened new social and political spaces in which new paradigms of alternative economic development could be introduced. It is from such spaces that we hope to reframe the hegemonic ideological structures of what life can be in Central Appalachia, clearings in which we might anchor a Green New Deal.

A Green New Deal for Appalachia would link ecological reclamation with post-coal economic diversification. Over twenty-eight local governments have endorsed the POWER+ initiative, many of them unanimously. (For updated information, see www.powerplusplan.org). Specific policy initiatives might seem fragile and vulnerable within the context of labile

national politics. But Appalachian environmental and social movements are forging promising techniques for transforming the knowledge and power structures that have locked much of the region into resource curse patterns of development. If citizens can work with local governments and appropriate experts to continue to do the hard work of translational research, it could be possible to have a policy framework ready for that historic moment when there is an opening in national politics for a Green New Deal for Appalachia.

Conclusion

We began with the argument that communities seeking to diversify formerly coal-dependent economies face a triple challenge. First, they need macrostructural support systems to relocalize economies after a long era of boom and bust caused by problematic integration into global and national natural resource markets. Second, the work of socioecological reclamation will entail complicated intellectual work that integrates diverse disciplines. Third, they need to build civic capacity and governance structures that are democratic and open to diversifying economic and social interests.

To solve these challenges, communities must find a way to deal with the fragmentation of federal agencies and expert specialization that makes it difficult to engage problems that are holistic and integrated from the perspective of communities. For instance, the Appalachian Regional Commission as an economic development agency is constrained by the history of development narrowly defined as "economic" in ways that preclude the multiple-issue approach sought by the Alliance (Feltault 2006). The multiple-issue approach espouses community development in its social, cultural, ecological, and economic aspects. A holistic approach to development does not divide these aspects into separate arenas, but allows for the integration of cultural, social, economic, and environmental policies through close attention to needs at the local level, where social and ecological knowledge is already integrated. Economic transition requires shifts within agencies toward holistic implementation of policies locally. Policy arenas that could be more thoroughly integrated within the planning purviews of environmental protection and the Appalachian Regional Commission include public health (already making some inroads) and cultural policy. "Culture" and "cultural values" are often informally cited as resources on which to draw in planning for post-coal development. There are many institutional and political barriers to integrating existing health and cultural policy and funding into the practical implementation of economic transition and ecological restoration.

This fragmentation of governmental and expert support structures creates a mystifying bureaucratic labyrinth. Navigating its mazes is time-consuming

for citizens trying to combat the tendency of special interests to capture government agencies that were set up to regulate business and other special interests. Scholars have described the varieties and stages of agency capture (Davidson and Frickel 2004; Hedge, Menzel, and Williams 1988; Levine and Forrence 1990). Companies or other special interests develop collective organizational mechanisms to influence government bodies by lobbying for regulation that is beneficial for businesses (Stigler 1971), to control or write regulations (Bernstein 1955), or to channel regulatory rents (wealth to businesses that is unearned in that it does not add value by producing social or economically valuable products) (Peltzman 1989). To combat the highly specialized webs of corporate state regulatory protocols and entities, citizens often have to specialize themselves. Specializing to engage with particular government agencies (and their unique configuration of allied special interests), CSOs often become detached from their grass roots.

However, as we have described, the Alliance for Appalachia is incubating some potentially scalable models to overcome this displacement of citizen participation. New forms of democratic, cross-sectoral knowledge sharing can provide support structures for bottom-up policymaking, translocal mutual support systems, community/scholarly collaborative research, participatory planning, and public deliberation. In a future issue of *JAS*, Part 2 of this article will discuss the Alliance's efforts in 2016–2017, to move their collaborative research into practical mobilization to shape policies and access government support structures and funding.

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This article is dedicated to the people who have powered the work of the Alliance for Appalachia. Often working against the odds and on a low budget, these grassroots activists do difficult work with remarkable creativity, self-sacrifice, and a steady commitment to participatory democracy.

Notes

1. The Abandoned Mine Land Fund now has about \$2.5 billion, which has accumulated from fees charged on coal mining since 1977, to cover reclamation of pre-1977 mines. It is managed by the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement in the US Department of the Interior. (For more on this highly complex program, see Dixon and Bilbrey 2015.)

2. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, the Appalachian Regional Commission describes itself as “a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government” (for more, see www.arc.gov).

3. In the Listening Project, many respondents said that an excellent model for organizing such a settlement fund would be the participatory bottom-up budget planning used in the tobacco settlement fund distribution in Kentucky (Taylor, forthcoming).

4. For additional information, see Kentuckians for the Commonwealth 2017; SOAR (<http://soar-ky.org>); Making Connections News (<http://www.makingconnectionsnews.org/>); Richardson (2013); Richards (2010); and Appalachian Funders Network (2017).

5. Highlander Center was founded in 1932 and was an important training center for the Labor and Civil Rights Movements. In the 1970s and 1980s it did pioneering work in participatory and action research, building on Appalachian traditions, as well as extensive international networking with South American and South Asian radical knowledge democracy movements. For more about the Highlander Center's history, see www.highlandercenter.org; Adams and Horton (1975/1980); and Glen (1988). For more about the Appalachian Economic Transition Fellowship program, see <http://www.appfellows.org/>.

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