

BUILDING COMMUNITIES WITH CULTURE:

APPALACHIA RISING

By

Jaime Paige Pierce

Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

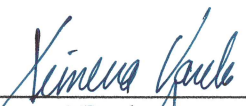
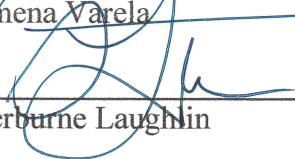
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Arts Management

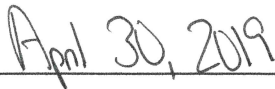
Chair:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ximena Varela  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sherburne Laughlin



\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Date



2019

American University

Washington, D.C. 20016

# BUILDING COMMUNITIES WITH CULTURE:

## APPALACHIA RISING

BY

Jaime Paige Pierce

### ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a sustainable development model for communities that have experienced exploitation and oppression. It reviews research on the creative economy, arts-based community development, creative placemaking, asset-based development, and participatory development, or community-based development. Central Appalachia is principal in the paper, which intends to identify ways Appalachian communities can mobilize their artistic and cultural assets to address the region's history of economic and cultural exploitation. Appalshop in Whitesburg, KY is an arts and cultural organization actively contributing to local, regional, and national development, finding ways to mobilize local culture and assets in a community-driven development strategy. This paper posits that Appalshop's model, which possesses attributes of asset-based, participatory, and arts-based development as well as creative placemaking and a democratic organizing process, can be instrumental to helping communities with a history of exploitation and oppression build a future of economic and cultural ownership.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my thesis advisor and committee members, Ximena Varela and Sherburne Laughlin. Thank you to Appalshop, the Letcher County Culture Hub, and all its partners for sharing their immense knowledge and stories with me. Special thanks to Ben Fink, lead organizer of Appalshop's national development initiative Performing Our Future, for providing his expertise and advising me throughout the research process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	vii
LIST OF DEFINITIONS .....	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Problems Communities Face .....	2
The Creative Economy .....	3
Arts-based Community Development, Creative Community Building, and Creative Placemaking.....	8
Asset-based Community Development.....	19
Social Capital .....	24
CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY.....	27
CHAPTER 3 CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY IN APPALACHIA.....	32
Challenges.....	32
What Development Typically Looks Like.....	37
Asset-based Development.....	40
Participatory Development .....	44
CHAPTER 4 CASE STUDY .....	52
Appalshop .....	52
Roadside Theater’s Community Cultural Development Practice .....	54
Letcher County.....	58
Letcher County Culture Hub.....	61
Background .....	61
Key Findings .....	66
The Future of the Culture Hub.....	74
Performing Our Future (POF).....	77
CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....	83
Summary .....	83
Recommendations .....	87
Future Research .....	98

Conclusion .....	98
APPENDICES .....	100
REFERENCES .....	104

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Differences Between Corporate and Participatory Development (by Susan E. Keefe 2009) .....	45
---	----

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Summary of Conceptual Differences Between the Three Perspectives of Social Capital (by Aurélie Brunie 2009) .....	24
Figure 2. The Appalachian Region (ARC 2008) .....	32
Figure 3. President Johnson at Tom Fletcher's Home in Martin County, KY (Photo by Walter Bennett 1964) .....	34
Figure 4. Looking at Appalachia, Kentucky (Photo by Josh Birnbaum 2014) .....	35
Figure 5. Looking at Appalachia, Kentucky (Photo by Susan Howell 2014) .....	36
Figure 6. Looking at Appalachia, West Virginia (Photo by Sam Owens 2015) .....	36
Figure 7. Roadside Theater Community Cultural Development Methodology (by Dudley Cocke 2015) .....	57
Figure 8. Art and Culture in Development (by Performing Our Future Lead Organizers 2018) .	64
Figure 9. Black Sheep Brick Oven Bakery (2019) .....	66
Figure 10. Letcher County Culture Hub (by Culture Hub Lead Organizers 2018) .....	68
Figure 11. Culture Hub Organizational Web (Art by Emily Hunt, Concept by Jaime Paige Pierce 2019) .....	76
Figure 12. How We Work (by Performing Our Future Lead Organizers 2019) .....	79

## LIST OF DEFINITIONS

*Art*: a deliberately crafted expression of culture; cultural work (“Art and Culture in Development” 2018).

*Arts-based community development*: arts-centered activity that contributes to the sustained advancement of human dignity, health, and/or productivity within a community (Cleveland 2011).

*Asset-based development*: a development strategy based on a community’s assets; assets include individuals, community groups, formal organizations, culture, environmental and physical attributes, and more.

*Creative cluster*: those enterprises and individuals that directly and indirectly produce cultural products (Gottlieb 2000).

*Creative community building*: efforts to weave multiple endeavors and professions into the never-ending work of building and rebuilding the social, civic, physical, economic, and spiritual fabrics of communities (Borup 2006).

*Creative community*: a geographic area with a concentration of creative workers, creative businesses, and cultural organizations (Gottlieb 2000).

*Creative economy*: depends who is defining *creative*; put simply—creative industries in the for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors; creative workers who are either self-employed or employed by these industries; and the places where they live and work.

*Creative placemaking*: revitalization by creative initiatives that animate places and spark economic development (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010).

*Creative workforce*: the thinkers and doers trained in specific cultural and artistic skills that drive the success of leading industries, which include, but are not limited to, arts and culture (Gottlieb 2000).

*Culture*: the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material traditions and features of people (“Art and Culture in Development” 2018).

*Participatory development*: local development based on local assets and participation from local people; aims to empower the community through the process of development (Keefe 2009).

*Social capital*: the networks and norms that enable participants to act together effectively to pursue shared objectives (Keefe 2009).



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

American cities are suffering from an overall loss of community due to economic hardships and a lack of social cohesion. Art is recognized as a tool for revitalizing places, while as an industry, it creates direct and indirect jobs as well as tradable goods (Wolff 2019). Performances, for example, generate revenue for venues and the businesses surrounding them as well as artists and arts organizations. Art is an expression of culture, which is present in every place and everyone. When culture is brought to the surface through art, unique, lively places, distinguishable from “Anytown USA” form. In cities with distinctive cultural features, tourism increases and more people are inspired to become residents. In addition, art can be combined with a number of other industries to better specific populations or entire communities. With this knowledge, arts-based community development grew and led to an entire industry of creative placemaking. Creative placemaking ignites local arts and cultural activity to “shape the physical and social characteristics of a place” (Bedoya 2013) by bringing cross-sectorial entities together.

In general, development is often led by distant institutions, foundations, corporations, or the government—the people with the power. These entities implement programs to “fix” communities and their deficiencies, leaving people self-critical and dependent upon these programs. Unfortunately, arts-based development and creative placemaking are not excluded from this notion. When artists come in to *make* a place or large arts organizations *engage* their community with one-off programs, local culture and people are often excluded from the process.

Asset-based development responds to these engrained power dynamics with an approach based in local assets. Participatory development is asset-based and community-based and is a model currently employed in Appalachia. Participatory development is local development that

relies on community participation every step of the way, from decision making to projects. Then, there are arts and cultural organizations developing their own development paradigms and finding ways to empower communities.

### The Problems Communities Face

Places of all sizes are facing problems due to economic shifts in America. With deindustrialization, thousands of jobs that many individuals could qualify for are no longer available. According to Pew Research Center, 42% of rural residents are struggling because of job scarcity, more so than their urban and suburban counterparts (Parker et al. 2018). Larger metropolitan areas appear to be thriving, but the cost of living is so high that many residents are struggling. As a result, 52% of urban residents report the scarcity of affordable housing as a problem. Well-paying jobs in these areas are, more often than not, highly specialized and require expensive degrees.

Economic struggles are not the only hardships in American cities. Community participation has also greatly declined over the years. American political scientist Robert D. Putnam argues this decline started in the 1960s in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000). Through extensive research, Putnam found fewer adults attending meetings for clubs, carrying out civic duties like voting, and having family dinners (Putnam 2000). Putnam partly blames this loss of civic participation, social connectedness, and social trust on the overall privatization of life. Miller McPherson, Matthew E. Brashears, and Lynn Smith-Lovin— University of Arizona and Duke University social scientists—conducted a study on social isolation in America. Through the study, they found 43.6% of people do not discuss “important matters” with others, or only trust one person, and are close to complete social isolation (McPherson et. al 2006). Modernization is only disconnecting people more. In-

home entertainment is more popular, creating an even greater divide between individuals and their communities. Adults can now work from home and video chat with colleagues, eliminating the need to ever go to an office, which is probably the easiest social opportunity for busy professionals.

Alleged solutions can worsen these problems and contribute new ones. Traditional development strategies often focus on a place's needs, deficiencies, and problems because they are driven by problem-oriented data (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). Large institutions, foundations, and service organizations develop programs to mitigate these surface-level issues and eventually, entire communities come to be defined by their deficiencies. According to John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, founders of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at DePaul University, these institutions "create a wall between lower income communities and the rest of society—a wall of needs which, ironically enough, is built...on the desire to help." When people only see the problems in themselves and their communities, they lose incentive. Thus, a culture of dependency forms.

### The Creative Economy

There are many definitions of the *creative economy*. Most simply, the creative economy is comprised of creative industries in the for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors; creative workers who are either self-employed or employed by these industries; and the places where they live and work. Some for-profit industries that might be considered creative industries are advertising, media, entertainment, and fashion design. In the nonprofit sector, this usually includes museums, performing arts presenters, and production companies of varying disciplines (dance, theater, etc.).

Art was not always considered a key player in the economy. In 2002, New York's Center for an Urban Future published "The Creative Engine," a report on cultural and economic development in New York City. They found of 150 economic and community development organizations in NYC, only six were combining arts and business in their development plans (Kleiman 2002). In addition, there had never been a coordinated arts and culture-based development strategy in the city.

With this report, the Center for an Urban Future revealed the benefits of the creative economy in NYC neighborhoods. They defined the creative economy as "creative-based economic clusters that attract dynamic and diverse pools of workers, who in turn attract an even wider spectrum of mixed industries and business." The Center recommended policymakers regard the arts as an economic sector and assist NYC neighborhoods in cultural development, backed by data that showed creative industries were spurring economic growth in neighborhoods outside of Central Manhattan.

Most importantly, the creative economy recognizes art as a vital revenue generating industry. It sees art as "wholly integrated into local economies" (Rushton 2013). Art itself generates income, which can either come from the activity of local arts and cultural organizations or from art (visual art works) as a tradable good. Arts advocates are conducting more research and publishing more reports to convey art's value within the economy. Americans for the Arts (AFTA) recently published "Arts & Economic Prosperity 5" (2016), a national report on the economic impact of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences. AFTA found the nonprofit arts and cultural industry generated \$166.3 billion in economic activity in 2015 ("Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: Summary Report" 2016). Organizations spent

\$63.8 billion, “which leveraged an additional \$102.5 billion in event-related spending by their audiences” to local businesses.

Research on the creative economy has spawned more theories on what it is and what it does. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research claims the creative economy “deals with the interface between economy, culture, technology, and social aspects. Having creativity as the main driver, the sector is concentrated around products and services bearing creative content, cultural value and market objectives” (UNITAR 2019). Richard Florida, an economist and urbanist, thinks of the creative economy in a more general sense. He argues everyone has creativity and that it distinguishes us as the superior species (Florida 2012). With an increased sense of creativity’s value, he sees it being a requirement for more job positions. Florida also developed a term for creative people: the *creative class*. He posits, “The distinguishing characteristic of the creative class is that its members engage in work whose function is to create meaningful new forms” (Florida 2003). The creative class is separated into two groups: the “super-creative core” and “creative professionals.” The super-creative core includes scientists, engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, designers, architects, and “the thought leadership” of modern society who are “nonfiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts, and other opinion-makers.” Creative professionals “work in a wide range of knowledge-based occupations in high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health-care professions, and business management.”

Ann Markusen, Gregory H. Wassall, Douglas DeNatale, and Randy Cohen—who have all researched art and the economy extensively—argue against Florida’s definition of the creative class because it is defined by government agencies’ categorization of occupations, which usually “excludes all creative workers without degrees” (Markusen et al. 2008). To try to make sense of

the creative economy, also referred to as the “cultural economy,” they analyze three efforts: The Creative Economy project of the New England Federation for the Arts (NEFA), AFTA’s Creative Industries Research Project, and the Cultural Occupations project conducted by University of Minnesota’s Project on Regional and Industrial Economics (PRIE). They found each project uses the creative economy differently based on the institution’s endgame. NEFA wanted to “articulate the nature and significance of the cultural sector in the region and build a commercial, nonprofit, and community coalition around state and local cultural policy” (Markusen et al. 2008), so they used a relatively broad definition of cultural activity while excluding irrelevant industries, such as science and engineering. In the report, NEFA created three terms that are still frequently used in the field:

- *The Creative Cluster*, defined as those enterprises and individuals that directly and indirectly produce cultural products;
- *The Creative Workforce*, defined as the thinkers and doers trained in specific cultural and artistic skills that drive the success of leading industries, which include, but are not limited to, arts and culture;
- *The Creative Community*, defined as a geographic area with a concentration of creative workers, creative businesses, and cultural organizations (Gottlieb 2000).

AFTA advocates for the value of the arts nationally. Their report defined the creative industries as “those with substantial artistic content” (Markusen et al. 2008) in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Meanwhile, with the Cultural Occupations project, PRIE challenged and expanded traditional art impact analyses. They conducted research on individual self-employed artists and workers with broader occupations, including architects and media designers. As shown in these three examples, definitions of the creative economy are not synonymous. They

include and exclude various industries and occupations, depending on who is doing the research and why.

In general, creative economy research often excludes certain areas of the country. Michael Rushton, director of the Arts Administration Program at Indiana University, maintains, “The arts benefit from the knowledge spillovers that can occur when increased numbers of creators work in close proximity” (Rushton 2013). Likewise, Florida believes “the economy itself increasingly takes form around real concentrations of people in real places” (Florida 2003). Much of the advocacy and research regarding the creative economy is about concentrated places, aka urban cities. As an urbanist, the majority of Florida’s research is done in metropolitan areas, and he advocates for their economic competitiveness. For example, in a lecture at the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce (RSA), he cites the United Nations, saying that by 2050, 70% of economic output will come from the largest metropolitan areas alone (Florida 2012). In an earlier paper, he argues that the creative class wants to live in “innovative, diverse, and tolerant” places and is abandoning the South and the Midwest to move to creative centers (Florida 2003). His advisory service, the Creative Class Group, limits their scope to urban issues and cities. Their hallmark event, CREATE, brings together creatives from the most populated places on the basis that “cities are perhaps the greatest expression of human civilization” that “drive all future innovation” and are “cauldrons of human creativity” (Creative Class Group 2019).

More recently, Florida conducted research in rural areas. In a 2018 interview with Wisconsin Public Radio, Florida admits innovation is often associated with more populated and economically diverse cities but goes on to discuss how creativity can be more valuable in rural communities (Florida 2018). He referred to a study completed by the US Department of

Agriculture (USDA) 15 years ago, which found innovation and creativity to be more closely connected to the presence of arts and culture in rural areas than in urban cities where technology and science were also large contributors. Based on the USDA's research as well as his own, Florida recommends rural communities put resources—monetary support, fundraising support, support through attendance, marketing support, and event support—into small arts organizations, galleries, and other cultural entities rather than spend large sums of money bringing new businesses to town.

While creative economy literature succeeds at portraying the economic relevance of arts and culture, albeit mostly in cities, the creative economy is not a complete development strategy. This is where *arts-based community development*, *creative community building*, and *creative placemaking* come in, which “includes and recognizes value in creative “industries” but goes beyond that, finding the broader identity of place and connecting people across sectors” (Borup 2006).

#### Arts-based Community Development, Creative Community Building, and Creative Placemaking

Arts and culture can positively affect the economy, but that is not all it can do. Today, organizations from various industries are adding arts components to programs to better serve their constituents. Clinics and hospitals use art to heal patients; schools advocate for arts education to improve their students' creativity, social-emotional skills, and empathy in exposing them to different cultures; public art programs hire local artists to beautify areas, and the list goes on. Over the past few years, people have realized the value arts can add to initiatives, which has led to a surge in *arts-based community development*. These strategies utilize art for its ability to improve economies, social welfare, aesthetics, health, and more.



The Ford Foundation, a longtime supporter of nonprofit arts, conducted research on innovative community development strategies in 2002 and 2003 and “observed that art and culture organizations support community involvement and participation, increase the potential for people to understand themselves and change how they see the world, and bolster community pride and identity” (Borrup 2006). Similar to the Center for an Urban Future, the Ford Foundation noticed that community development organizations were isolated from arts organizations, thus missing out on potential development opportunities.

William Cleveland, founder and director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community, says arts-centered development is an old field because artists have worked with and for their communities for years, but that it is also a new field because we now recognize “public participation and artistic creation as mutually interdependent” and see its benefits beyond the aesthetic realm (Cleveland 2011). Moreover, arts-based community development was “founded on the belief that the arts can be a powerful agent of personal, institutional, and community change.” It is based on “arts-centered activity that contributes to the sustained advancement of human dignity, health, and/or productivity within a community” (Cleveland 2011). This includes arts-based activities that:

- EDUCATE and INFORM us about ourselves and the world
- INSPIRE and MOBILIZE individuals or groups
- NURTURE and HEAL people and/or communities
- BUILD and IMPROVE community capacity and/or infrastructure

Tom Borrup—leader and innovator in nonprofit cultural and community development—does work in *creative community building*, which are “efforts to weave multiple endeavors and professions into the never-ending work of building and rebuilding the social, civic, physical,

economic, and spiritual fabrics of communities” (Borrupt 2006). Borrupt’s recommendations are divided into economic and social strategies with a proviso that economic health and social cohesion are linked. The five economic strategies are: 1) Create jobs through nurturing artists and small cultural organizations; 2) Stimulate trade by creating the right conditions for cultural tourism; 3) Attract investment with artist live/work spaces, making them anchors around which to build the economy; 4) Diversify the local economy, clustering arts organizations as retail anchors and activity generators; and 5) Improve property and enhance value by leveraging the proximity of cultural amenities (Borrupt 2006). However, there are reservations to some of these strategies. For example, enhancing property value can lead to unaffordable housing, which can drive poor or working-class people out of an area, including artists. Borrupt admits “finding ways to increase prosperity and build equity for all is the challenge.”

Borrupt’s five strategies for building social and physical infrastructure are: 1) Promote interactions in public spaces through public art and collective cultural experiences; 2) Increase civic participation with cultural celebrations; 3) Engage youth in the community and include them in meaningful civic work; 4) Promote stewardship of place with good placemaking and design practices; and 5) Broaden participation in the civic agenda through community-centered arts and cultural practices. These strategies can be used in projects intended to build communities, which “requires many people with different kinds of leadership skills to carry it to fruition, so the less it belongs to one person, the better.” Present leaders within a community must be willing to offer their skills to initiate and implement projects and engage the public.

Creative community building is similar to *creative placemaking* in that design is used to build social and physical infrastructure, and projects aim to form partnerships. Placemaking is “creating something collectively valued and used as a key building block to a vital community”

(Borrup 2006). “Place” most often “applies to our own local—entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke” (Lippard 1997). It is realized when an area becomes more than land for a person, emerging from their emotional connection to a space. When an individual makes this connection, the collective is better off because, “when we know where we are, we’re in a far better position to understand what other cultural groups are experiencing within a time and place we all share.” This could be part of the reason why creative placemaking is commonplace in the arts industry now.

The importance of place to a community along with art’s capability to transform spaces and work across sectors culminates in creative placemaking. In 2007, Jeremy Nowak, President and CEO of The Reinvestment Fund, collaborated with University of Pennsylvania’s Social Impact of the Arts Project and the Rockefeller Foundation to publish “Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment” (2007). The report reveals how arts and culture can revitalize urban neighborhoods. They refer to placemaking as “a creative process that manages a range of practical tensions: between market and civic capacities and roles; physical design and social utility; and the need to integrate the old and the new” (Nowak 2007). Nowak says artists are “natural place-makers” for their ability to uncover, express, and repurpose assets, and arts and cultural activities are a natural placemaking tool. In addition to generating revenue, these activities “provide novel opportunities for expression and creativity; they reinforce and build social capital; they facilitate connections across urban and regional boundaries; they help to construct quality public spaces; and they provide educational opportunities for residents.” It is from this report that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) developed an interest in placemaking and created Our Town grants (Chu and Schupbach 2014). Our Town grants “create an opportunity for artists and arts organizations to connect with

various development areas including public health, housing, economic development, and even agriculture, thereby bringing these stakeholders together for their community's benefit" (Chu and Schupbach 2014).

Creative placemaking is "revitalization by creative initiatives that animate places and spark economic development" (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010). In creative placemaking, "arts and culture are working to help achieve a place-based change, which means that it is the interventions that are creative, not necessarily the outcomes" (Bennett 2014). Projects can take many different forms based on its initiators, beneficiaries, key stakeholders, scope, and desired results.

Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, the writers and researchers behind the NEA's whitepaper on creative placemaking, provide numerous examples of creative placemaking projects that vary in scope. There are statewide projects, such as the New England Creative Economy Initiative which brings people who represent all sectors across New England states together to ensure investment in the creative economy. In this initiative, state governments provide essential leadership and resources. Citywide projects often involve the support of mayors or city councils. For example, Mural Arts Philadelphia is uplifting neighborhoods with murals created by artists, local youth, prison inmates, and others reentering the workforce. There are small town projects using arts and culture to define a distinct identity, such as The Higher Ground Project in Harlan County, KY. The Higher Ground Project, led by The Appalachian Program at Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, employs art, design, and commerce to transform spaces, provide leadership training, and facilitate the creation of community events to catalyze economic development (ArtPlace 2012).

Creative placemaking can yield different results. For instance, a project can serve diversity by encouraging cultural expression, as seen in Arnaudville, LA which “remade itself from a small, forgotten community into a rural hub of cultural activity” (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010). This started when local artist, George Marks, gathered his friends and other artists that were willing to relocate to “celebrate, not change Arnaudville’s unique rural culture reflecting Cajun, French, German, Spanish, and Native American influences.” Together, they turned a vacant auto-store into an arts center called Arnaudville’s Town Market Rural Arts Center. The center is occupied by a school where residents are invited to share their talents in culinary, literary, performing arts, visual arts, and environmental sustainability, and the French Consulate presents individuals and groups from French-speaking countries. There is also a café with a stage, an art gallery, and Marks’ art studio. Transforming vacant buildings into a cultural center made the town visibly more vibrant, which attracted support from local and state governments, foundations, and people from across the region. People from Canada, Haiti, and Africa gather every month at the café to eat a meal and speak French together. In celebrating local culture, “creative leadership awakened Arnaudville to its own assets.”

Creative placemaking can support “economic diversity and place-based prosperity in the community, creating more opportunity for all” (Bennett 2014). Nurturing the arts and cultural sector can lead to jobs for writers, designers, stagehands, dancers, actors, photographers, musicians, painters, arts managers, and more. Additionally, “arts and cultural investments help a locality capture a higher share of local expenditures from income” (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010). Simply offering entertainment attracts residents and even outsiders to an area, and arts audiences spend additional money eating, shopping, parking, etc. (“Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: Summary Report” 2016). Jamie Bennett, executive director of ArtPlace America,

suggests: “By clustering together different types of art spaces along underused streets, communities are able to create consistent patterns of foot traffic, which provides a positive presence on the street to improve public safety and to drive a neighborhood’s economy, as these members of the public dine and shop” (Bennett 2014). This was true in Arnaudville where occupying vacant buildings with businesses that celebrated local culture brought residents out of their homes, into local restaurants, and even attracted tourists.

Creative placemaking serves livability “by offering social activities and improving an area’s aesthetics” (Bennett 2014), which in turn attracts new residents and contributes to a creative economy. To make this case, Bennett mentions a study completed by Carol Coletta from the Knight Foundation and Joe Cortright from Impresa Consulting. The study investigates what quality of life offerings are important to today’s workforce, finding “vibrant, close-in neighborhoods” with ample arts activities to correlate with population growth (Cortright 2005). Likewise, Florida says the creative class often wants to work in creative centers that possess technology, talent, and tolerance (Florida 2003).

In addition, creative placemaking serves livability by encouraging civic participation: “Art can extend an invitation, bringing together groups of people with divergent viewpoints who might not readily agree to talk or work together in other settings” (“The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community” 2008). In Willowbrook, a neighborhood in Los Angeles known for poverty and gang violence, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission (LACAC) worked with the nonprofit arts organization LA Commons and artist Rosten Woo to develop an asset map and visioning document. LACAC recognized development fatigue in the neighborhood, so they wanted to use art as “a vehicle for galvanizing residents and characterizing the distinct cultural identity of Willowbrook” (Schupbach and Ball 2016). By

conducting interviews and focus groups with residents to identify their wants and needs and creating a magazine to highlight residents' talents and ideas, LACAC brought citizens together to define and develop place.

Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus name six components of a successful creative placemaking strategy in their research. It starts with one or many entrepreneurial initiators with a vision; demonstrates commitment to a place and its distinctive character; mobilizes public will—both of the government and local citizens—around the vision; garners private sector support and buy-in; and, arts and cultural leaders actively participate, sharing their talents, experience, and resources (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010). Lastly, successful creative placemaking is said to establish partnerships with government agencies; across the public, commercial, nonprofit, and community sectors; and between levels of government (i.e. state and federal). Combined, these partners provide greater funding opportunities, knowledge, and legal power in order to “strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.” However, several people mentioned the difficulty in forging these partnerships, claiming it took ample time and “required listening, accommodating others’ agendas and timelines, sharing information, and teaching each other skills.” It also requires “knowing when to abandon unfruitful or conflict-ridden relationships that are impeding progress.”

Additional challenges come from countering community skepticism; finding adequate financing; clearing regulatory hurdles; maintaining and sustaining programs; avoiding displacement of current residents, artists, and smaller nonprofit arts organizations and gentrification; and developing metrics for performance and evaluation (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010). Maria Rosario Jackson, professor at Arizona State University’s Herberger

Institute for Design and the Arts and former senior advisor of arts and culture at the Kresge Foundation, also declares creative placemaking “has been associated with gentrification, displacement of residents with low-incomes (often including artists), and loss of affordable real estate and lifestyle options in some markets as creative people cultivate places that become hip and attractive to those with disposable income seeking interesting places to live” (Jackson 2018).

In an interview with the researcher, Gadwa Nicodemus talked about additional discoveries since writing the creative placemaking whitepaper for the NEA in 2010. Since then, she started a consulting firm, Metris Arts Consulting, which “seeks to provide high caliber planning, research, and evaluation services to reveal arts impacts and help communities equitably improve cultural vitality” (Metris Arts 2018). In a recent blog for Metris called “Journeys in Creative Placemaking/keeping/taking” (2018), she discusses creative placemaking’s pitfalls. Here is Gadwa Nicodemus’ “official list of creative placemaking’s warts”:

1. The emphasis on placemaking ignores/discounts/undervalues the culture of people in that place and its history, including racist policies.
2. Creative placemaking has become conflated with gentrification and displacement.
  - a. E.g., it “artwashes” gentrification.
3. The cross-sector partnerships emphasized in creative placemaking risk insufficiently including grassroots residents, mom and pop businesses, and artists.

This list is informed by the work of other placemaking entrepreneurs, too. For example, Roberto Bedoya, executive director of Tucson Pima Arts Council and founder of the initiative P.L.A.C.E. (People, Land, Arts, Culture, and Engagement), comments on the popularity of artist live/work spaces and cultural districts, which only focus on “the built environment” (Bedoya 2013). He claims “its insufficiency lies in a lack of understanding that before you have *places of*



*belonging*, you must feel you *belong*.” Bedoya also mentions “blind spots,” which come about when creative place-makers lack awareness about the history of a place, including the local politics of cultural and civic belonging and dis-belonging. To this end, Gadwa Nicodemus contends:

*...the ability to influence change in your community, so that it’s not just the inevitable, invisible economic hand shaping decline or growth, is key to belonging. When you can shape a place, you can claim it. Arts and culture are critical, under-utilized tools to give people agency to shape their place’s future and build more distinctive communities* (Gadwa Nicodemus 2018).

“Journeys in Creative Placemaking/keeping/taking” includes additional content from Alternate ROOTS’ *Creating Place: The Art of Equitable Community Building*, a multimedia account of creative placemaking created by Alternate ROOTS artists. Vicki Meek, an independent curator and cultural criticism writer, discusses creative placemaking becoming “creative placetaking” in her home of Dallas: “People of color who disproportionately get displaced when this development push begins, almost never gain support from the artist community in their pushback against gentrification, primarily because the artists tend to be white and have never actually engaged with the communities of color where they’ve stationed themselves” (Meek 2018). Meek recommends artists of color form alliances within their communities and conduct placemaking where creativity is derived from within, not from artists outside the community. Gadwa Nicodemus agrees with Meeks and advises communities to celebrate and preserve the range of cultures authentic to their place and foster inclusive belonging.

Despite creative placemaking’s warts, it can activate places when it does not *take* them away from the community. Institutions, government agencies, and foundations see its benefits and are dedicating more resources to projects than ever before. Xavier de Souza Briggs, Vice

President of Economic Opportunity and Assets at the Ford Foundation, says this is a shift from “near obsession with the hardware of place—the physical systems—to a much deeper appreciation for the role of human capital, knowledge, and creativity” (Hecht 2014). For instance, Ben Hecht, president and CEO of Living Cities (a collective of foundations working to combat poverty), combines community development and creative placemaking strategies to address the intangibles, like energy and spirit, that make a vibrant community, build social capital, animate public spaces, and challenge preconceptions of what a place should be. There are also entities dedicated to creative placemaking such as ArtPlace America. ArtPlace America is a partnership of 14 foundations, eight federal agencies, and six financial institutions devoted to positioning arts and culture as a core sector of community development and planning through project investment and research (Bennett 2014). ArtPlace America funds projects that have:

1. Defined a community based in geography, such as a block, neighborhood, city, or even a county;
2. Articulated a change the group of people living and working in that community want;
3. Proposed an arts-based intervention to help achieve that change; and
4. Developed a way to know whether the change occurred.

Moreover, arts-based development, creative community building, and creative placemaking often do not aim to benefit the entire community in a holistic way. For example, the San José Arts Incubator was launched by San José’s Office of Cultural Affairs to create jobs. Capitalizing on the presence of dynamic talent in Silicon Valley and the active City Office of Cultural Affairs, the Arts Incubator provides office space, management assistance, technology, and funding opportunities for emerging cultural organizations. The Office of Cultural Affairs successfully created full-time and part-time jobs and nurtured multicultural arts organizations,

which ultimately increased the number of multicultural arts events in downtown San José. There are also projects like Mural Arts Philadelphia, the nation's largest public art program. Mural Arts is actively transforming and uplifting the Philadelphia community through public art. These programs serve their purpose, enabling artists and cultural institutions to make a place-based change. It should also be noted that most creative placemaking projects are not perpetual, but the very act of galvanizing the community can lead to further development (Gadwa Nicodemus 2019).

### Asset-based Community Development

*Asset-based community development* strategies are a response to traditional development models. For instance, traditional development in low-income urban neighborhoods use what Kretzmann and McKnight call “dominant deficiency models.” Dominant deficiency models are controlled by larger institutions, foundations, and service organizations that only see the negative aspects of a neighborhood, and develop programs to address its problems. Neighborhoods are defined by their deficiencies alone and come to rely on these programs. Dominant deficiency models are also less effective because “significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993).

Top-down development models and the tensions they create in different types of communities can be traced back to the Progressive Era (Green and Haines 2012). In the Progressive Era, professional-class citizens pushed for development programs that involved collaboration between them and experts. However, they not did consider the potential for dependency in such a relationship. In the 1930s, President Roosevelt initiated federal programs to combat poverty as part of the New Deal. These programs created tensions between the federal

government, which was supporting these programs, and the local governments implementing them. For example, southern legislators maintained their programs to not serve African Americans. Likewise, the Housing Act of 1949—an effort to revitalize downtowns—largely displaced African Americans in an effort to move middle-class residents back to cities. When President Johnson declared the War on Poverty in the 1960s, a ton of new government programs were put in place. These programs forged more tensions between people and the government, mostly related to the government’s lawful authority. For instance, private property could legally be condemned for public purposes.

Central to all of these development programs is an outside entity. Gary Paul Green and Anna Haines, authors of *Asset Building and Community Development* (2012), note “public assistance expands in times of high unemployment and social unrest and contracts when order is restored and the economy improves.” While public participation is encouraged by some government assistance programs, they do not give residents any power (Green and Haines 2012). Similarly, when organizations lead development, they often create a wall between them and the people they are trying to help, even if unintentional.

Green and Haines define community development as a “planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life” (Green and Haines 2012). Here, “capital” is not limited to monetary resources. Rather capital includes physical, human, social, financial, environmental, political, and cultural assets. Green and Haines declare “these assets will not generate as many local benefits if communities rely on either markets or governments to guide their development” and argue for development controlled by community-based organizations. Community-based organizations, or CBOs, are said to be good contenders for leadership because they are rooted in place and have extensive contacts and information. In

addition, their primary mission is aimed at the community and local residents usually comprise the board and staff. Public participation is also central to Green and Haines' community development strategy. By public participation, they mean the involvement of all people within a community (even non-citizens) in the various activities produced by organizations, institutions, and the government. Public participation is important in community development for a few reasons: local residents become more involved in programs and projects if they have input in decisions; local residents know more about the assets and needs within their community than outside developers; and public participation is necessary to a democratic process.

Green and Haines also discuss various community organizing models, including the Alinsky model where a professional organizer works with organizations to identify issues of common interest; the Boston model where welfare clients are contacted individually to define their self-interests; the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) model, which combines the Alinsky and Boston models; and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) model which comes from the Alinsky model but emphasizes the importance of the professional organizer maintaining close ties with community organizations throughout the process. Green and Haines discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each model, which is largely dependent on context and the resources available for the organizing process. IAF's organizing model is often used in an asset-based approach because it encourages organizers to identify interests, talents, aspirations, and values of individuals through relational meetings. This is a legitimate way to recognize and mobilize local resources because the organizer is going to the source—the people in a place—of community assets, values, and visions.

The first principle of asset-based community development is that it is *asset-based* (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). It starts with “what is present in the community, the capacities

of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area—not with what is absent, or with what is problematic, or with what the community needs.” Since it based on what is already present in the community, “the development strategy concentrates first of all upon the agenda building and problem-solving capacities of local residents, local associations, and local institutions.” However, this internal focus does not minimize the role external forces have in contributing to desperate conditions, “nor the need to attract additional resources to these communities.” Finally, if community development is to be asset-based, it must be relationship-driven, “thus, one of the central challenges for asset-based community developers is to constantly build and rebuild the relationships between and among local residents, local associations, and local institutions.” Kretzmann and McKnight’s version of asset-based development is what they call a “capacity-focused development model,” which uses “the capacities, skills and assets of lower income people and their neighborhoods.” This approach has many benefits. First and foremost, if the positive traits possessed by individuals are put to use, they begin to see themselves as contributing citizens.

Asset-based development usually starts with asset mapping. Mapping can begin by taking inventory of the gifts and skills of individuals within the community (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). Inventory of informal associations and community groups as well as private and public institutions should also be taken. Then, other assets, like land and physical infrastructure, can be considered. Together, individuals, informal groups, and formal businesses comprise the major asset-base in most communities. Once identified, individuals should be connected to other people, associations, groups, and institutions to grow community power. Some additional examples of asset mapping are:

- The identification of economic development opportunities through the mapping of available skills and work experience.
- The documentation of natural resource assets that may promote economic development through tourism or increased home values.
- The assessment of consumer spending practices to identify the potential for new businesses in the neighborhood.
- The development of a community resources inventory to identify the expediciencies of residents in providing services, such as child care, to identify the potential for more providers in the community (Green and Haines 2012).

Green and Haines also suggest community visioning because “the visioning process focuses on assets rather than the needs of the community.” It “strives to establish a vision of place through broad public participation rather than one individual’s view.” The advantages of community visioning are abundant: it allows for an “expansive, innovative, and proactive future orientation;” it focuses on strengths rather than deficiencies; and it “expands the notion of public participation beyond that of other models and suggests that the community can design and create its own future.”

Opponents of asset-based development often argue the value of a needs-assessment. They argue that when problems are identified, residents are roused to solve them. Additionally, asset-based organizers are often “accused of ignoring power relations within communities” (Green and Haines 2012), while other approaches establish power relationships between leaders and citizens. In any case, this work is necessarily relationship-driven and requires building and rebuilding relationships among residents, community groups, businesses, and organizations. Since networks are so important to this work, social capital is a key asset.

## Social Capital

*Social capital* is the “networks and norms that enable participants to act together effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Keefe 2009). American political scientist Robert D. Putnam finds, “the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value,” therefore, a well-connected community is more productive than a disconnected one (Putnam 2000). He explains further: “The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself...if he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community” (Putnam 2000). Essentially, social capital is an asset comprised of human interactions and relationships, which yield benefits for both the individual and the collective.

	Relational approach	Collective approach	Generalized approach
Level of manifestation	Networks of individuals, groups, or organizations	Small, relatively homogenous, and exclusive groups	Social capital as individual attribute
Aspect of social life	Relationships an actor develops and maintains with other actors	Quality of the relationships among actors within a group	Individual attitudes and predispositions towards others, and sometimes institutions
Dimensions emphasized	Resources embedded in personal networks Social relationships that provide access to resources	Density of interactions	Societal norms
Core processes	Differential access to and ability to mobilize valued resources via the mobilization of social contacts	Social capital defined in relation to its function as factors that facilitate cooperation: – Thick mutual trust – Norms of reciprocity – Networks	Generalized trust influences how people relate to each other
Utility	Activities primarily benefit actor (individual or corporate) Also facilitates the functioning of social and political life (network view)	Group-specific activity that cannot be pursued individually (e.g., collective action), but the features supporting social capital also facilitate individual benefits	Social good that binds society together and encourages civic behaviors
Fungibility across domains	Limited because use value of resources and network characteristics is issue specific	Limited to activities that require similar patterns of expectation and organization	Fungible

Figure 1. Summary of Conceptual Differences Between the Three Perspectives of Social Capital (by Aurélie Brunie 2009)

Since social capital is built by networks, relationships, and human interactions, anyone and everyone can contribute to its growth (Light 2004).



Networks and social connections can take many different forms, so it is important to recognize social capital as an umbrella term. To make sense of social capital, scientist Aurélie Brunie divides social interactions into three categories: the relational approach, the collective approach, and the generalized approach (see Fig. 1, Brunie 2009). The relational approach focuses on the ability of actors (individuals, groups, organizations) to mobilize their social contacts in order to obtain a valued resource such as a job. Relational social capital can produce both social support and social leverage when needed. In the collective approach, connections facilitate cooperation and coordination at the group level. Collective social capital relies on mutual trust and understanding within smaller groups of people and no longer resides with the individual. Meanwhile, the generalized approach is subjective. Interpersonal connections and behaviors are influenced by personal values and attitudes. Different from collective social capital, generalized social capital does not require mutual trust. It only requires widespread trust and faith in others, which ultimately creates a shared social conscience that can encourage people to act on their civic duties.

Social capital is difficult to measure because it relies on ephemeral concepts like reciprocity and social norms, making it hard to communicate how it serves development. Economist Anil Rupasingha worked with his colleagues to identify measurable inputs of social capital. Their approach to measurement was based on the argument that “one form of social capital manifests itself in individuals through their participation in associational activities” (Rupasingha 2006). To measure, they looked at the quantity of political and social activities because they “facilitate information-sharing through repeated interactions and these interactions promote reciprocity,” as well the number of collective organizations and shared spaces.

What can communities do to develop and maintain social capital so it can be utilized in development? Shared community spaces are a good starting point (Bevan 2016). When people gather together, connections form out of shared experiences, a collective identity surfaces, and traditions are maintained or created. Arts activities can uplift people and communities because of their social nature and inherently build social capital. Performances and cultural events bring people together, leaving them with something to bond over. Gathering around local culture maintains traditions and allows a collective identity to emerge. This notion is also supported by creative placemaking. Nowak says artists are natural place-makers because of their ability to uncover, express, and repurpose assets (Nowak 2007). He asserts arts and cultural activities as natural placemaking tools because they provide novel opportunities for expression and creativity, reinforce and build social capital, facilitate connections across urban and regional boundaries, help construct quality public spaces, and provide educational opportunities.

In addition, social capital is a valued asset in development because it can “make it easier to reach and implement collective decisions,” “support involvement in the democratic process,” and “resolve disputes” (Brunie 2009).

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

This paper proposes a sustainable development model for places that have experienced oppression and exploitation, one where arts and culture are utilized to activate communities and create a future of local ownership. It also intends to reveal how arts and cultural organizations can best serve community development.

Economic and social distress due to exploitation and top-down power affects Central Appalachia immensely. To this end, the researcher identified Central Appalachia as principal to this thesis. In analyzing arts and cultural organizations doing development work in Appalachia, the researcher discovered Appalshop's growing development paradigm. Appalshop is a nonprofit arts and cultural organization located in the coalfields and Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. The organization has a history in "creating the conditions for creating jobs" (Fink and Pickering 2016) and a growing desire to further community and economic development in the county, region, and nation. Following methodology, this paper surveys Appalachia's unique problems, present assets, what development typically looks like in the region, and how participatory development builds communities from the bottom-up and is currently employed in Appalachia. Then, the researcher offers a case study on Appalshop's development work and how it has come to fruition in their home county with the Letcher County Culture Hub.

Community development is an extensive topic with an abundance of literature. Arts-based community development and the use of arts and culture in development have grown recently, partially because of the amount of research and reports produced by arts advocates. The data reveals the widespread benefits of arts and culture, asserting it as a tool to better individuals, groups, and entire communities. The same goes for the creative economy—more data on the

creative industries and their place within the greater economic landscape exists today. Likewise, creative placemaking grew, in part, from Nowak's conclusion that arts activities and artists are natural place-makers, and partly because of the increasing interest of foundations and agencies—the entities with the money. For instance, the NEA grants funds to hundreds of creative placemaking projects via the Our Town grants program and commissions reports and books on the subject.

Research on the creative economy, arts-based community development, and creative placemaking helped the researcher define how arts and culture can strengthen communities. It also revealed their “warts.” The researcher's interview with Gadwa Nicodemus expanded this analysis and revealed further growth in the field.

Before developing a case for what could better Appalachian communities, the researcher needed to identify tensions in the region. This process began in 2018 when developing a policy brief for arts support in Eastern Kentucky. As a part of the policy brief, the researcher conducted interviews with Highlands Promise Zone staff, Eastern Kentucky natives, and leaders at cultural organizations in the area. With this prior knowledge, the researcher turned to literature to learn more about Appalachia's history and current state. She used a few additional modalities to further assess problems in Appalachia: current articles and reports, Appalshop films, other artistic initiatives, and primary research. The primary research continued at the Appalachian Creative Placemaking Leadership Summit in June 2018 and thereafter with interviews as a part of the study on the Letcher County Culture Hub.

The Appalachian Creative Placemaking Leadership Summit was pivotal to the direction of this thesis in an inconspicuous way. Going into the summit, the researcher intended to limit the study to creative placemaking and how it could build social capital and economic

infrastructure in Eastern Kentucky. While there, she attended a panel discussion called *New Visions for Economic Development* hosted by Jeremy Liu from PolicyLink, where Ben Fink from Appalshop discussed the organization's development work in Letcher County, KY. Fink talked about the Letcher County Culture Hub, a unique organization comprised of community partners and organizations working to create community wealth, and how, as lead organizer, he was organizing people, money, and ideas to make this all happen. After the summit, research expanded beyond creative placemaking to using arts and culture for development in Eastern Kentucky. This is because: 1) Creative placemaking is not necessarily what the most innovative arts-based community development projects in the region are doing; and 2) *Making* places is not necessarily the best thing for communities.

Following the summit, the researcher contacted Fink, inquiring about a visit to Appalshop and Whitesburg, KY to further her research on the Letcher County Culture Hub. In October 2018, she visited Whitesburg in Letcher County and conducted interviews with Fink and Culture Hub partners including Nell Fields, president of the boards at Cowan Community Center and Appalshop, and Bill Meade, chief of the Kings Creek Volunteer Fire Department. With further knowledge on Letcher County, the Letcher County Culture Hub, and development, the researcher expanded the scope of her project, surveying asset-based development as well as community-based development in Appalachia.

Art is not a central focus in general asset-based development literature. It is more concerned with offering strategies to capitalize on a wide-range of resources. Similarly, in the literature on community-based development in Appalachia and more specifically participatory development, arts activities are suggested as a means to mobilize, organize, and revive a sense of community (Lewis 2009) but are not principal. The work that Appalshop is doing brings these

together—art, culture, and people—for a community cultural-driven development strategy seen in the Letcher County Culture Hub.

To further the study of the Culture Hub, the researcher conducted additional interviews with partners in the organization, either by phone or written questionnaire (see Appendix A).

These interviews were with:

- Annie Jane Cotten, current lead organizer of the Letcher County Culture Hub
- Valerie Horn, principal in local county food work
- Mike Caudill, Carcassonne Community Center
- Zelma M. Forbes, Hemphill Community Center
- Don Amburgey and Deborah A. Sturgill, Cumberland Mountain Arts and Crafts Council, Inc.
- Wanda Whitehead, Revive Our Lower Letcher (ROLL)

Hearing personal accounts from each of these partners was vital to analyzing the Culture Hub and all its facets.

The researcher acknowledges the damaging effects of an outsider misconstruing a community. If time allowed, the researcher would have visited the county more to spend time with residents. She communicated with Culture Hub participants in whatever ways possible, despite the constraint of distance, to make conclusions based on authentic accounts.

Investigation of Appalshop’s development methodologies was aided by “Community Cultural Development as a Site of Joy, Struggle, and Transformation” written by Dudley Cocke, longtime artistic director of Appalshop’s Roadside Theater, for *Arts and Community Change: Exploring Cultural Development Policies, Practices, and Dilemmas* (2015). Further analysis of the Culture Hub, Appalshop’s national initiative Performing Our Future, and the practices used,

including the process of community *organizing*, was completed with materials created by Appalshop's lead organizers and economists at the Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Project (EEGLP) at Lafayette College as well as media produced by Appalshop and other relevant sources.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY IN APPALACHIA

#### Challenges

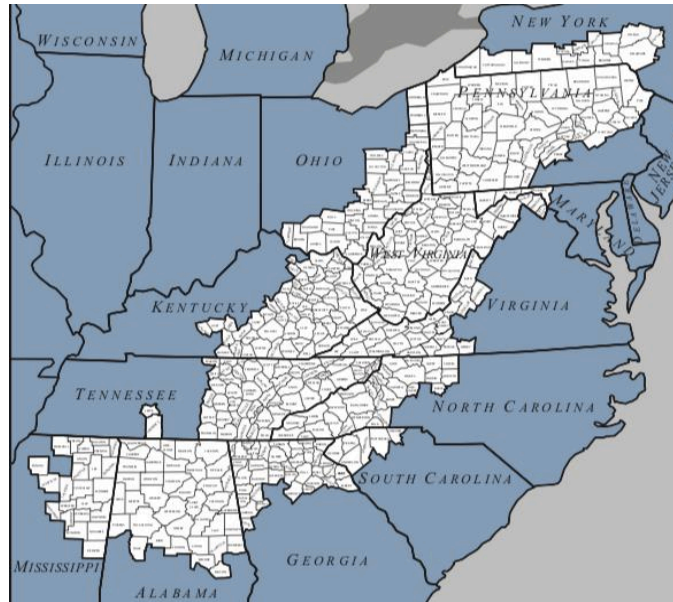


Figure 2. The Appalachian Region (ARC 2008)

Development in Appalachia has, historically, tended to be based on the extraction of wealth and an exploitative mono-economy. Absentee ownership is the catalyst for many problems in Appalachia. Zachary D. Swick, Appalachian Transition Fellow with the Highlander Research and Education Center, cites the 1981 Appalachian Land Ownership Study, named “the most comprehensive review of resource ownership in the region” because it surveyed tax records for over 20 million acres of land (Swick 2014). The study found absentee owners, mostly multinational corporations and federal agencies, possessed almost 75% of land rights and over 80% of mineral rights.

Absentee ownership contributed to economic depression in Appalachia. Without owners, the people with the power, having any interest in the locale, there was no advancement of the “transportation, education, and health infrastructure necessary for a more diversified economy”



(Swick 2014). It also limited the region's potential for economic development—without any available land, new businesses could not come to the area. Essentially, external ownership took power out of the region and left people dependent upon one or two exploitative industries and government assistance. Since the early 1900s, “a major source of Appalachian income has come from public benefit programs. Need for these benefits is inevitable given the extent of mining and other work-related injuries, and environmental hazards to which Appalachians have been exposed” (Sarnoff 2008).

The “control of land by a single industry brings with it the control of jobs, helping to create dependency of workers and their communities both on the landholders who own the resources, and the employers who provide the jobs (often these may be one and the same)” (Geisler 1983). This is most evident in counties known for their abundant natural resources. In Eastern Kentucky, the coal industry was the region's livelihood for centuries which poses additional problems because natural resources are not infinite, and many industry practices are detrimental to the land and people. Coal mine owners and miners were constantly at battle over the unsanitary living conditions in company houses, low wages, few benefits, and unsafe work conditions (Boissoneault 2017). State politicians normally supported owners over miners with their decisions. In the early 1900s, Leaders of the United Mine Workers of America led protests to fight for better work conditions. Bystanders started perceiving miners as violent and angry when they were in fact just fighting back against abuse. Unions were discouraged by just about everyone in power, and the rights of owners took precedence over the rights of miners. Because of this, most miners were nonunion and therefore, without any protection. Kentucky's last union coal mine closed in 2015.

In Kentucky, coal production peaked in the 1990s at over 125 million tons and dropped below 25 million tons by 2015 (Ellis et al. 2016). In 1974, 38% of the work force was employed by coal mining in Harlan County compared to 12.8% in 2015. The extraction of resources also means the extraction of wealth. Charles C. Geisler, author of *Who Owns Appalachia?: Landownership and Its Impact* (1983), quoted a planner from Harlan County who said: “Harlan is one of the wealthiest counties in the country, but not in terms of local capital or development. The money is not in Harlan banks, but in banks located in the eastern part of the United States” (Geisler 1983).

Poverty has been an issue in Appalachia since industrialization at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when resource extraction and outside ownership grew. During this period, literature and sketches of Appalachian people portrayed a “strange land and peculiar people” (Keefe 2009). The “stereotypic themes that persist today of mountaineers as violent feudists, criminal moonshiners, and ignorant hillbillies fed the growing perception of Appalachian cultural deviance that served to justify the process of dispossession of their land and resources.” After President Johnson launched his War on Poverty campaign from Tom Fletcher’s home in Martin

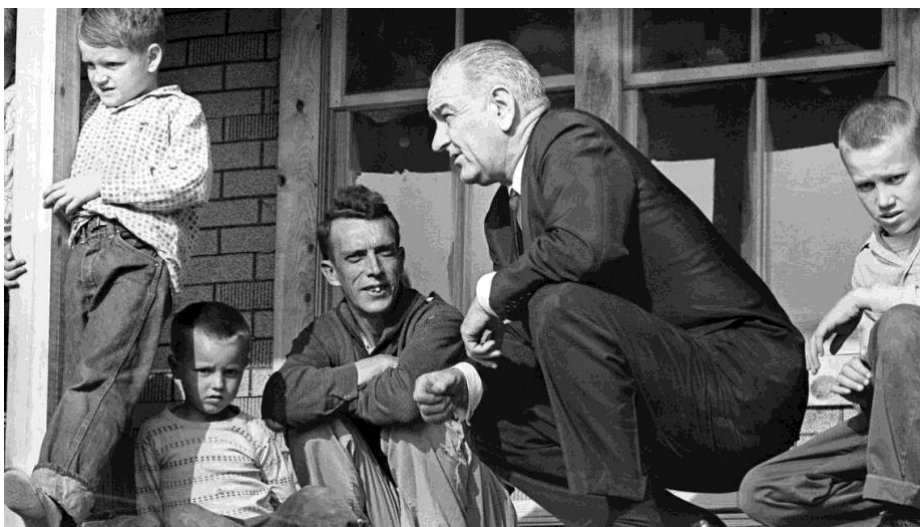


Figure 3. President Johnson at Tom Fletcher's Home in Martin County, KY  
(Photo by Walter Bennett 1964)

County, KY in the 1960s, people outside the region developed a fascination towards images of Appalachian poverty.

During the War on Poverty, government workers who were not from nor had substantial knowledge on Appalachia were developing intervention strategies for the region (Eller 2008), based on their views of Appalachians as deviants. Journalists and reporters who visited Appalachia superimposed a “white hillbilly” image (Sarnoff 2008), one of backwardness, opposition to progress, inferiority, and crumbling structures. This stereotype of inferiority has one of the most devastating social effects because it “can hold people back not only from externally imposed “progress,” but from daring to fulfill personal ambitions” (Sarnoff 2008). While Northern and Southern Appalachia have become considerably less poor, Central Appalachia remains economically deficient. For instance, from 2012-2016 the poverty rate in Appalachia was 16.7%, but Appalachian Kentucky had the highest poverty rate in the region at 25.9% (Appalachian Regional Commission 2016).

Appalachian artists have a substantial role in questioning the imposed Appalachian identity. Appalshop filmmaker Elizabeth Barret from Hazard, KY directed the film *Stranger with a Camera* in 2000 to examine the tensions between the media and the people living in



Figure 4. Looking at Appalachia, Kentucky (Photo by Josh Birnbaum 2014)

Appalachia. Barret focused on an extreme instance from December 1967 where Canadian filmmaker Hugh O'Connor was shot by Kentuckian Hobart Ison. Barret asked: "What is the difference between how people see their own place and how others represent it?" and "Who does get to tell the community's story?" (Barret 2000). Through interviews and 1960s films and news stories, Barret analyzed the fascination with the impoverished coal dependent communities of Eastern Kentucky; how the media only revealed deprivation; and how this angered the people who actually enjoyed their lives, or "the real wealth of the culture."

Likewise, photographer Roger May started a photo project to establish a visual counterpoint to War on Poverty photos. May writes: "Drawing from a diverse population of photographers within the region, this new crowdsourced image archive will serve as a reference that is defined by its people as opposed to political legislation" (May 2019). Now in its fifth year, *Looking at Appalachia* is a robust collection of photographs from every state in the region.



Figure 6. Looking at Appalachia, West Virginia (Photo by Sam Owens 2015)

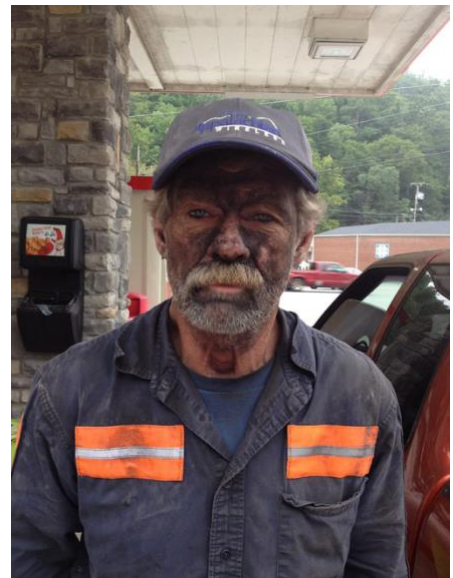


Figure 5. Looking at Appalachia, Kentucky (Photo by Susan Howell 2014)

Additionally, it can be hard to define "community" in Appalachia (Keefe 2009). Keefe posits, "In the mid-twentieth century, the perception of a lack of community in Appalachia was

associated with the concept of a “culture of poverty,” which is characterized by psychological reactions of apathy and alienation, a lack of trust in institutions, and the breakdown of social relations beyond the family.” This perception is still ingrained in Americans, partly because communities are often imagined as tightly clustered neighborhoods of homes and businesses—a feature of downtowns and suburbs. Appalachian communities are defined by place just as bustling downtowns are, but their place is within the mountains, something those outside the region have a hard time relating to. Appalachian communities also hold distinct elements of social capital including reciprocal relationships, tight networks, religious ties, and social groups. Preserving and building upon social capital in Appalachian communities can reap many benefits for development projects.

### What Development Typically Looks Like

Top-down development strategies forge a culture of dependency, no matter the place. The same holds true in Appalachia where “communities have been overwhelmed by a master narrative and economic development projects in which they play the poor country cousin awaiting cultural enlightenment and expert assistance” (Keefe 2009). Problem inducing economic development can be traced back to the 1880s when the region was industrialized. Railroads were built to extract natural resources, mainly timber and coal, which caused more people from outside the region to purchase land. While resource extraction helped fuel urbanization in the Northeast, “rising taxes in the mountains and the need for money in an increasingly market-driven rather than subsistence-based economy forced farmers to sell out or take on wage labor jobs to supplement incomes” (Keefe 2009). Consequently, poverty took root in Appalachia.

During the War on Poverty, “Appalachia became a pawn in a great national experiment that sought to eradicate poverty without confronting the specific institutional and economic structures that abused the region in the first place” (Eller 2008). President Johnson established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to implement programs. Preconceived notions “allowed policy makers to see poverty as a universal condition that could be overcome by American-style “development” but also displaced responsibility for poverty onto the culture of the poor themselves.” Community action was central to War on Poverty programs, but most OEO administrators thought this could be achieved simply through giving places attention and bringing isolated individuals into mainstream culture.

The OEO’s community action programs were a departure from welfare checks and economic structures to what they referred to as “human capital.” Programs “favored human services over income transfers, reform of individuals rather than economic equality” (Brauer 1982). The initiative called for Community Action Agencies (CAAs) run by local residents, specifically by poor people in hopes of increasing their individual capacity. This was also a mechanism for funneling federal funds to local governments, which then established CAAs to implement a plethora of programs. However, none of these programs led to a coordinated strategy to combat poverty in Appalachia. Instead, “what gave the campaign a collective momentum and unity of spirit was the moral sense of outrage, hope, and mission that the legislation itself unleashed” (Charbonneau 2009).

At the same time, the Christian Appalachian Project (CAP), a nonprofit organization, established programs to help the poor in Appalachia. CAP’s programs provided impoverished Appalachians with resources and opportunities to pull themselves out of poverty. The organization was notorious for capitalizing on images of Appalachian poverty as a part of their

fundraising strategy, while most contributions did not even go towards programs; over 80% of CAP's annual budget went to administrative costs (Eller 2008). In both instances, development meant attempting to change the behavior of impoverished people in Appalachia with a little opportunity and consideration. They failed to address economic and cultural exploitation and actually further abused the region by exploiting Appalachian culture and people to gain attention.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was founded in 1965, a time when “poverty rates exceeded 50 percent in some counties (in Kentucky) and much of the region lacked adequate water, highways and healthcare to support Appalachia and its people” (Estep 2017). As a result, “the ARC has focused on creating an infrastructure for conventional economic development, especially highways, industrial parks, vocational education, and health care to hypothetically attract industry” (Keefe 2009). More recently, *Lexington Herald Leader* staff reporter Bill Estep wrote that “between October 2015 and January 2017 alone, the ARC supported 63 projects in Kentucky totaling \$31.9 million...that spending, which has been matched by more than \$65 million in other aid, is projected to create or retain more than 1,200 jobs and provide education or workforce training to more than 2,300 people...” (Estep 2017). While the ARC's work is important, their programs do not address misuse of the region's resources and culture.

No matter the year, the entities leading development programs in Appalachia failed to implement a coordinated strategy to address mistreatment of the region. Economic development has typically been based on creating “a favorable business climate” to lure industries to the area (Lewis 2009). A favorable business climate involved people working for low wages, a nonunion labor force, and exploitable natural resources with few laws and regulations. This type of

development only recognizes economic capital and “human capital” in the sense of obtaining workers to do the manual labor required to extract natural resources.

In sum, economic activity in Appalachia has always been based on extracting resources and wealth. The development strategies intended to combat poverty in the region failed to recognize the assets in Appalachian communities including the skills possessed by individuals, and even further abused the region. Corporations, government agencies, or other “savior” organizations implemented programs based on their assumptions that simply giving impoverished people resources, giving them attention, and bringing them into mainstream culture would help. These entities further contributed to a negative Appalachian identity by disseminating images of crumbling structures or sad, inferior people to benefit their own agendas.

### Asset-based Community Development

Asset-based community development utilizes and builds upon available capital while galvanizing residents to participate in strategizing and implementation. Christopher Holtkamp and Russell C. Weaver, economic and development researchers from Texas State University, see bottom-up development practices, driven by citizens and grounded in local knowledge and shared identity, replacing top-down development in Appalachia more frequently (Holtkamp and Weaver 2018). They claim, “Alongside these tendencies toward more participatory/collaborative forms of planning and development has been a burgeoning interest among planning practitioners and scholars in the concept of *social capital*—perhaps because the two ideas share at least some ground in common,” like that social capital is a key ingredient for public participation and collective decision making.



Holtkamp and Weaver assert shared place identity as a primary facilitator of social capital in Appalachia. Place identity is an individual “attachment to and identification with a particular place” which, when shared with others in the community, creates “a sense of *social insideness*...that contributes to a community’s capacity to act collectively.” To analyze the power of social attachment and networks in development, they investigated the relationship between indicators of social capital and economic well-being in Appalachia. To measure shared place identity, they looked for businesses and other entities with “Appalachia” in the name. In addition, they used Rupasingha’s measurements of social capital—political and social activities, collective organizations, and shared spaces. Holtkamp and Weaver found increased social capital to correlate with a decrease in economic distress and declare, “Opportunity for intervention lies in developing connections between people *in* a place, and between people *and* that place.” This research reveals that both cultural and economic development in Appalachia should promote social and civic activities, shared spaces, and collective organizations as well as each community’s distinct identity.

Moreover, strong social connections built on shared values are often present in Appalachian communities, making social capital one of their greatest assets. Bonding social capital, which is held within groups of people (Putnam 2000), is prevalent in Appalachian towns, likely from people connecting over shared interests, traditions, and values. Keefe states bonding social capital is one of the most important assets to consider for participatory development in Appalachia (Keefe 2009). However, social capital in Appalachia needs preservation because it is threatened by modernity and economic development. For instance, when large extractive corporations like Walmart locate to rural towns, they put small local businesses out, triggering a loss of “self-determination, social networks, local gathering places, community participation, and

mutual aid” (Lewis 2009). In addition, “interactive dimensions and spaces that can be argued as key to the formation of “community” are changing in ways unrecognizable to older generation members,” hindering socialization as well as intergenerational knowledge and tradition sharing (McGrath and Brennan 2011).

Arts and cultural activities can build and preserve social capital, and Appalachia has many rich arts traditions to take advantage of, from bluegrass music to square dancing to storytelling. Brian McGrath, political science and sociology professor at the National University of Ireland, and M.A. Brennan, agriculture and extension education professor at Penn State, conducted research in Appalachia to explore “the process and significance of creative cultural practices, particularly based on “tradition,” as mechanisms for generating community interaction, retaining and communicating collective knowledge, and the implications of such practices on community and social well-being” (McGrath and Brennan 2011). First, they recommend establishing performing arts programs, both for children in school and for the greater community, because they promote self-expression, creativity, and ultimately contribute to personal development. Personal development can positively impact Appalachian communities: “Such activity firmly connects with defining who people are to themselves and as part of a wider community; and in this sense, the “personal” often implicates the “community.” Therefore, using performing arts activities to build and preserve social capital not only improves social ties, but also helps Appalachian communities discover and develop a unique identity—one that is defined by them and not imposed upon them.

In addition, cultural traditions bridge the gap between generations, and McGrath and Brennan identified a desire among older generations to nurture their successors. They found older generations taking pride in passing information along to younger people. The ability of

traditions to encourage cross-generational bonding is apparent in the Kentucky Arts Council's folk art apprenticeships, made possible through the Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant. This program allows folk artists to share their craft with a mentee and have the work they make together displayed in a traveling exhibit, *The Makings of a Master*. In one instance, Erin Cokonougher, who is from Letcher County, KY, was mentored by square dance master Charlie Whitaker prior to his death in 2009 (*The Makings of a Master, Master Square Dance Calling, Charlie Whitaker* 2011). Whitaker was the iconic caller at Carcassonne Community Center in Letcher County, and Cokonougher continued calling at Carcassonne even after he passed. Dr. Susan Spalding, Dance Historian at Berea College, comments on the partnership: "Erin was taken with square dancing from her first exposure to it, and really started to learn just as soon as she got to know Charlie...She calls right in spirit of everything she has learned from Charlie." Here, an Appalachian folk art tradition forged a cross-generational relationship and, Cokonougher was able to carry Whitaker's legacy into the future.

Arts traditions "provide invaluable venues for interaction that might not otherwise exist in the community" and "celebrate a local connectedness which often transcends our various local divides" (McGrath and Brennan 2011). McGrath and Brennan found friendships emerging from group quilting, music classes, and square dancing groups. They also found storytelling and story circles to build community. In one storytelling project, residents said they participated to recall memories, share those memories, and hear other people's accounts. Storytelling also provides a unique opportunity to build a collective identity: "Reliving the life of Appalachia through story can constitute an important corrective and resistance to the negative stereotyping and myth-making that surrounds Appalachia and its people. For those involved, sharing stories of hard work and solidarity counters much of what has been contained in dominant discourses about the

region.” For this reason, story circles, invented by Appalshop’s Roadside Theater with Junebug Productions from New Orleans, were used as a tool for community organizing in Letcher County.

Regardless of the specific mode, the interactions stimulated by the arts and arts traditions are invaluable. When people come together to express themselves creatively and share an experience, collective needs, interests, and desires emerge. The community develops agency to define a collective identity and act out of their own interests. As shown in the case study, arts traditions are an adequate way to start community-based development.

### Participatory Development

*Participatory development* is community-based and is a response to corporate development in Appalachia. Susan E. Keefe, American anthropologist and professor emerita at Appalachian State University, declares, “Participatory development is, above all, local development” (Keefe 2009). Accompanying the use of “participatory,” a primary component of the strategy is the people residing in a place. Participatory development strives to empower participants through the process of development, whereas in traditional corporate development, power is “in the hands of the dominant group, where it is used to oppress and control groups with less access to basic economic resources.” It is then coercive and top-down, where “one gains power at another’s expense.” There are many differences between corporate development and participatory development offered by Keefe in *Participatory Development in Appalachia: Cultural Identity, Community, and Sustainability* (see Table 1, Keefe 2009).

Participatory development cares about the growth of individuals alongside the community. Growth then “becomes defined as the cumulative competence gained by community members through action taken on behalf of the community’s welfare.” Trainings and other

opportunities for the local citizenry to develop knowledge and skills need to be implemented as a part of the strategy. Helen Matthew Lewis—sociologist, historian, and

Table 1. Differences Between Corporate and Participatory Development (by Susan E. Keefe 2009)

Corporate Development	Participatory Development
1. Values science and “value-free” methods and theories to produce the single best solution for human problems	1. Values local culture and social organization and sees development taking multiple paths
2. Reliance on professionals with specialized expertise	2. Collaboration between professionals and community members, strengthening stakeholders and empowering them to contest power holders’ control of meaning
3. Belief in progress and use of natural and social resources to increase economic production	3. Values economic production <i>and</i> production of social capital and strengthening spiritual other ways of knowing
4. Resources viewed as theoretically unlimited; values individualism and consumption	4. Protection of local environment and natural resources necessary for cultural survival; cooperation in satisfaction of basic needs
5. Focus on infrastructure and technological development	5. People-focused development fostering research skills and local leadership; inclusion of women, ethnic minorities, the poor
6. Success measured by economic factors	6. Success measured by sustainability after the experts leave

activist who specializes in Appalachia and women’s rights—believes “participatory development requires educating for creativity, regaining popular knowledge and history, understanding democratic decision making, and consciousness of religious and political symbols” (Lewis 2009). With this knowledge, the residents of a community gain “the capacity and the social capital to access other resources, network, and collaborate with other groups to revitalize or develop their community.”

Lewis created a “Twelve-Step Recovery Program from Industrial Recruitment” based on her work in rural mountain communities, most of which lost their economic base in mining,

timbering, manufacturing, or agriculture. These communities were “peripheral, marginalized, and left out of any economic development activity,” so “people formed community development groups to try to rebuild their communities and their economies from the bottom up” because “the “trickle down” never reached them and doesn’t work.” The “Twelve-Step Recovery Program from Industrial Recruitment” is as follows:

1. Understand your history—share memories
2. Mobilize/organize/revive a sense of community
3. Profile and assess your local community
4. Analyze and envision alternatives
5. Educate the community
6. Build confidence and pride
7. Develop local projects
8. Strengthen your organization
9. Collaborate and build coalitions
10. Take political power
11. Initiate economic activity
12. Enter local/regional/national/international planning processes

Lewis also discusses the underlying values and assumptions of community-based development. The first value is *sustainability* and caring for the welfare of future generations. The second is *people development*, which involves “helping them to gain skills, education, pride, and confidence.” People development also means appreciating everyone and relates to the next value of *inclusivity*. Additionally, participatory development is *culture based* and “does not

destroy but encourages culture and creativity.” Lastly, it “starts with *local resources* and begins by looking at the glass half full rather than half empty.”

Mary B. LaLone, a proponent of participatory development and an anthropology professor at Radford University in Virginia, offers insight on development in Appalachia by explaining a failed development project that she was a part of. When a coal dependent town in Appalachia discovered mines were planning to shut down in the near future, residents formed a grassroots group to identify other ways to generate income. The community wanted to capitalize on the area’s rich coal mining and railroad history, so they decided to explore the possibility of building a cultural heritage museum to attract tourists. Residents reached out to nearby universities to design a plan. The collaboration pushed them to apply for and then receive a grant of \$30,000 to conduct a feasibility study for the museum. With the \$30,000, the residents decided to hire a professional development firm to conduct the study. Firm representatives spent a total of two days actually in the town where they conducted 15-minute interviews with locals and university researchers involved in the project, one of which was LaLone. She claims representatives from the firm carried an air of authority, and people, including herself, left their interviews confused and feeling like they barely had time to get a word in. Before the firm left town, they told the community that the cultural heritage museum was not feasible and suggested they build an RV park instead. Residents were disheartened, even angry, and a massive divide over how the \$30,000 was spent split the community. The firm was not in contact again for six months when they sent the final report.

What did the firm do wrong? This case shows “one cannot work effectively *with* a community without understanding and anticipating how the community is likely to react and interact with the practitioner” (LaLone 2009). From being a part of this experience, LaLone’s

strategy now blends anthropological practices with methods of participatory development. She adopted a partnership approach because it “usually produces more successful results at all stages of the project, enhances (rather than strips) people’s sense of dignity, and gives community members credit for their knowledge and contributions.” She offers techniques for working in a culturally appropriate way in order to build and maintain relationships and suggests “carrying out rapport building activities in the initial stages of a project; working with the community pace of life rather than against it; learning about the cultural history of the community; identifying and making use of community assets; and incorporating abundant opportunities for community input and participation into a project,” all of which require a development practitioner to build relationships, something that cannot be rushed. To those who argue this is not cost effective, LaLone says you “need to weigh the detriments of having a project fail because the community did not trust you, was offended by your actions, or quietly refused to cooperate.”

Furthermore, assets cannot be recognized without getting to know the community, their culture, and their place. This is important in Appalachian communities because their culture, systems, and networks are essential. By not taking the time to build relationships in the community and to learn about the place’s history, the firm failed to realize the individual skills that were present, the community’s heritage, and the power of reciprocity in tight-knit Appalachian communities. In this particular town, LaLone saw things being accomplished from the system of “owing one a favor” and reciprocity. Once practitioners form relationships, she suggests making all projects partnerships by asking community members to lead discussions, participate in decision-making, and collaborate with researchers. This requires the person organizing development to take a nonhierarchical stance; these activities are intended to be collaborative and promote the ideas generated by community members.



Not everyone is capable of maintaining these values and building the necessary relationships, so community-based development requires a different kind of leader. In the 1990s, Nelda Knelson Daley, professor of sociology at Radford University, and Sue Ella Kobak, county attorney for Lee County, VA, were writing of a new type of development leader in Appalachia—the *familiar outsider*: “Unlike many of the missionaries and reformers of the past, the familiar outsider does not have an overt and well thought-out agenda to change mountain society nor does he or she have a stereotypical preconception of mountain people” (Daley and Kobak 1990). Familiar outsiders come from other places because they are passionate about improving an area. They maintain economic, cultural, and social connections and are different in their background and education, yet they deny their power to “replace individualism with “community” (Daley and Kobak 1990). While the familiar outsider was a progressive idea in 1990, someone organizing a community-based effort should be invited into the community (Lewis 2009) and become a part of the community (see Chapter 4, Case Study) in order to truly make a lasting change.

Moreover, participatory development strives to “strengthen stakeholders in contesting power holders’ authoritative control of cultural meaning” (Keefe 2009), but there are hurdles to intervening with power dynamics. To this end, Melinda Bollar Wagner, professor of anthropology and Appalachian studies at Radford University, assesses the barriers to community-based development. In the early 2000s, the Appalachian Power Company proposed building a 765,000-volt power line, which angered West Virginia and Virginia residents and instigated protests (Wagner 2009). Wagner, with over 100 students, studied cultural attachment of land in the counties where the power company considered placing their power line. The line was seen as a threat to beauty and historic continuity, and therefore place: “Without place

conversation, the contents of culturally meaningful behaviors and processes of place-making disappear, cutting us off from our past, disrupting the present, and limiting the possibilities of the future” (Low 1994). It became a battle of place versus progress, but social capital proved to at least give residents a seat at the table (Wagner 2009). People in these communities who had never spoken before gathered in shared spaces to plan their course of action; grassroots groups from different counties met to discuss the matter; and Wagner and her students formed relationships with people to help them plead their case. A main course of action, aside from protest, was for people to hold meetings with the US Forest Supervisor, who provided testimony to the Commonwealth of Virginia’s State Corporation Commission—the people making the decision. Ultimately, the power line was built but in the SCC’s hearing, they accepted Wagner and her students’ findings of cultural attachment to place—that the residents were emotionally, economically, and socially connected to the land. With this in mind, Wagner concludes “county residents’ social capital contributed in a number of ways to the state-level process of decision making on the power line” but had a limited effect on the ultimate decision made by the people in power.

In participatory development, success is measured “by sustainability after the experts leave” (Keefe 2009). To sustain something is to continue or prolong it for an extended period of time or without interruption (Oxford University Press 2019). Sustainability has several different meanings. To the Environmental Protection Agency, sustainability is based on the principle that “everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment” (EPA 2019). Sustainability is then pursued by creating the conditions for humans and nature to exist in a way that supports the present and the future. In community development, sustainability can mean a number of things. Among most usages is “1) a focus on

current behavior to benefit the future, 2) the link between economy with ecology, and 3) a general dissatisfaction with current human lifestyles and behavior” (Green and Haines 2012). Sustainability in community-based development considers all of these attributes and also means that the outcomes will last for an extended period of time without interruption. Participatory development, a true community-based effort, is more likely to be sustainable because the community is driving the effort. Participation from residents and “involving local people in research, decisions, and priority setting is a prerequisite for long-term sustainability and effectiveness of community development initiatives” (Keefe 2009).

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDY

#### Appalshop

Appalshop is a nonprofit arts and cultural organization located in the coalfields and Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky, specifically the town of Whitesburg in Letcher County. Appalshop was founded during the War on Poverty as a result of the OEO's programs and the American Film Institute's Community Film Workshop Council (Charbonneau 2009). With a \$58,000 grant from the OEO, the Community Film Workshop of Appalachia was established. Tensions between local and federal governments arose, partly because the OEO failed to realize there was no substantial media industry in or around Whitesburg. Students in the film workshop did not want to join the out-migration of people because they were connected to Appalachia, which aroused them to produce films about life in the region. This Appalachian cultural rootedness came to define Appalshop as it moved from a product of the OEO to an autonomous organization in 1972. It is said that Community Film Workshop of Appalachia survived to become Appalshop because the program's government supervisors had a hard time getting to Whitesburg (Cocke 2015). Dudley Cocke, longtime artistic director of Appalshop's Roadside Theater, writes:

*...this relative lack of oversight resulted in the trainees learning by doing: they took the government issued equipment and started making films. Their subjects were their neighbors and kin—a hog butchering on a frosty morning, a mid-wife assisting a birth (twins as it turned out, to everyone's surprise), and foot washing at the Old Regular Baptist Church. The power of telling their own culture's stories quickly became apparent to the trainees, who believed that even their amateur results were more revealing and authentic than the War on Poverty renditions permeating the professional mass media.*

The notion of living in a place with fewer opportunities and enforced inferiority would always be present, but the Appalshop trainees used film as a means to oppose negative stereotypes and

scarcity. The mere usage of media technologies transcended the hillbilly image (Charbonneau 2009).

Appalshop continues to embrace media, music, theater and other arts as an agent for creating opportunities and meaningful change. Jeffrey Brown visited Appalshop for a *PBS News Hour* in February 2018. In an interview with Ada Smith, Institutional Development Director at Appalshop and daughter of founding member Herb E. Smith, she discusses how people in the area are inundated with a way of life and discouraged from staying in Appalachia if they want to pursue specialized careers. To this, she responds: “I feel like Appalshop has proven that other things can happen here” (Brown 2018). Appalshop expanded over the years and now houses media production and training facilities in film and video, a community radio station, a 150-seat theater, an art gallery, and a regional archive of over 4,000 hours of film, audio recording, and still images (Appalshop 2019). These are Appalshop Films/Headwaters Television, Appalachian Media Institute, Roadside Theater, June Appal Recordings, and WMMT community radio station. The organization empowers artists in many ways. In a piece for the NEA’s *How to do Creative Placemaking* (2016), Appalshop leaders Ben Fink, who is lead organizer of Performing Our Future and former lead organizer of the Letcher County Culture Hub, and Mimi Pickering, director of Appalshop’s Community Media Initiative, wrote:

*Yet Appalshop’s biggest economic role may be in creating the conditions for creating jobs. A national leader in grassroots arts, Appalshop has pioneered the practice of “first voice/authentic voice,” creating culture of and by the people of Appalachia, not about them. Appalshop documentaries have no narrator: every word is spoken by the people being documented. Roadside Theater plays have no script: every word comes from stories told and recorded by participants. Appalshop’s administrative offices are filled with old-time musicians, radio hosts, filmmakers, visual artists, organizers, and community activists: at Appalshop there is no producers-versus-consumers, servers-versus-served, us-versus-them. There is only us, here, together, building our collective voice in a region where so many feel voiceless (Fink and Pickering 2016).*

Appalshop has always focused on finding ways for art and culture to stimulate the local economy. Smith says:

*If people want to come downtown for things. If there's music, if there's events, if there's things to do, then, all of a sudden, there's more businesses. If people have an opportunity to try some different things, then all of a sudden they are like, whoa, I could start a record store, I could start a tattoo parlor, I could start a bar (Brown 2018).*

### Roadside Theater's Community Cultural Development Practice

Within Appalshop is Roadside Theater. Roadside Theater has a robust history of its own told best by Dudley Cocke in “Community Cultural Development as a Site of Joy, Struggle, and Transformation” (2015). Roadside was founded in Whitesburg in 1975 by a small group of local musicians, storytellers, and writers. There was not enough local money to support the company, and the Kentucky Arts Council turned down their grant applications more than once, so Roadside took its productions to New York City (Cocke 2015). While in NYC, the company developed a uniquely Appalachian aesthetic informed by “what its members had known all their lives: storytelling, ballad singing, oral histories, and church,” and produced content about life in Appalachia. This attracted audiences in NYC, which “demonstrated that the local and specific, when rendered faithfully and imaginatively in the voices of the culture’s young people, could touch audiences everywhere.” Roadside started presenting work nationally, but after 14 years, noticed a “disconnection between the rural, working class origins of the plays’ form and content and the social class of those who attended professional theater.” In a similar vein, company members recognized their audiences at home in Whitesburg were drastically different from their audiences on tour. At home, attendees were more than spectators—they came “to bear witness to their cultural identity.” With this, company members decided Roadside would only perform in

venues committed to bringing inclusive audiences to see the work. However, this became difficult when presenters were only concerned with pleasing their elite audiences and donors.

In wanting everyone “to participate in decisions about their community’s public arts and culture programming” and the artistic experience itself, Roadside adopted story circles. The various aspects of story circles, from call-and-response to active sharing and listening, both rely on and encourage public participation. The company uses this oral tradition to generate content for plays and lead post-show conversations where attendees can further explore the production and how it connects to them personally. In sharing and reflecting, “difficulties in a community often rise to the surface, including issues from which its members are suffering.” Because of the vulnerability required in a story circle, and the potential for judgment, Roadside curates story circles in a specific way. A company member facilitates the conversation. Everyone sits in a circle and must participate. Each person tells a story of the same length, and after someone shares, the person to their right gets a turn. People are only allowed to respond with their story when it is their turn. After everyone shares, reflection through interpersonal dialogue commences.

Roadside’s Community Cultural Development (CCD) theory and practice employs story circles and other activities for public participation, individual reflection, and collective realizations, intending to help a community become more inclusive and self-aware (Cocke 2015). In residencies, Roadside members start by presenting a play from their repertoire, one appropriate for that particular community and residency, and then share the company’s history. Then, the ensemble leads story circles and trains community members to become facilitators, ending in a celebration of music, stories, and songs. Throughout the story circle and celebration, the community’s culture, assets, and desires become apparent and are used to develop their own

play. Once the play is on, Roadside members assist with creating the infrastructure for a community-based theater or other development organization. Lastly, the organization is introduced to Roadside's wide-network so communities can learn and share together.

When Roadside is invited into a community for a residency, the community decides how to use the CCD practice "with the caveat that whatever the project's purpose(s) and goals, a cross section of the entire citizenry be continuously encouraged to participate as equals in it."

Stakeholders (including funders) cannot take a passive role because all must "share some of the responsibility for the process, the products, and the outcomes of a cultural development effort."

Through CCD, Roadside aims to initiate generative thinking, a culture of inquiry, and continuous learning among stakeholders. They seek "to establish collective governance and consensual practice among engaged stakeholders in the pursuit of three questions linked to a process of intentional learning":

- What aspect of our community life are we trying to celebrate or transform, and why is that important?
- How are we trying to achieve this, and why is that the best strategy?
- How will we know we are succeeding; what data will provide us evidence, so we can improve the work and demonstrate its accomplishments to others?

These answers inform overarching project goals and objectives. As the project gains momentum, Roadside members are attentive to when they should lead and when they should follow. Overall, these are the key concepts of Roadside's CCD practice (see Fig. 7, Cocke 2015):



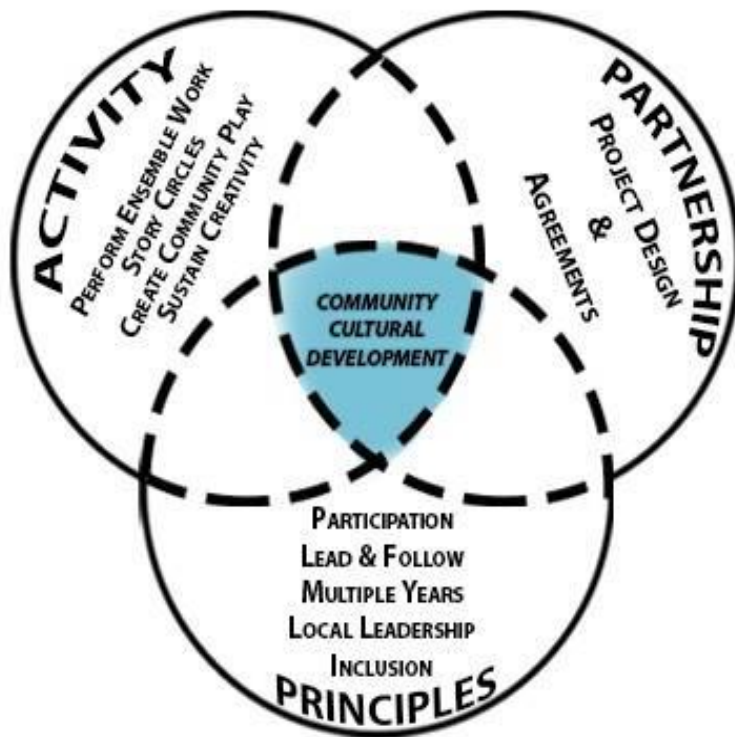


Figure 7. Roadside Theater Community Cultural Development Methodology  
(by Dudley Cocke 2015)

CCD “utilizes the inherent intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material traditions and features of a community to encourage individual agency in support of community well-being.” Developed from the company’s history and artistic practices, Roadside claims “that by sharing (performing) and examining one’s personal story in public settings marked by manifold perspectives, not only can one learn to speak for oneself from the depth of one’s own experience, but one can learn to act in concert with others to achieve what is fair and just for the whole in which one resides.” Roadside’s growing development practice and Appalshop’s placement as a cultural institution in a region transitioning out of a coal-based economy left them with a desire to further community and economic development. This desire is fulfilled locally through the Letcher County Culture Hub.

## Letcher County

Letcher County is located in historically coal rich Eastern Kentucky. The county is comprised of the cities Blackey, Isom, Jenkins, Neon, and Whitesburg. With a population just around 24,000 (Appalachian Regional Commission 2016), this rural, Appalachian Mountain county is a place GPS's have trouble picking up. The county is graced by the endless natural beauty of the mountains and other features such as a nature preserve with a 60-foot waterfall, Fish Pond Lake, and miles of trails. And its rich culture is kept alive through art, old and new:

*Anywhere local residents gather, the twist of a tale, the strike of a bow, or the stroke of a brush or pen pay homage to the legacies of mountain dance, craft, lore and music. Strong initiatives spearheaded by dedicated citizens and engaged corporate sponsors are helping the county communities find new ways to honor old traditions. These efforts encourage residents to unleash their creativity, dreams and aspirations to mine for new alternatives that mold a diversified economy ("Letcher County Profile" 2019).*

But Letcher County is not immune to the tribulations present in Appalachian communities with exploitable resources. From 2012-2016, the ARC reported a poverty rate of 29.8% in Letcher County (for some perspective, the national average at the same time was 15.1%) and continual economic distress (Appalachian Regional Commission 2016). Deficiency-based development and media contribute to the continuation of these problems. In 2014, Annie Lowrey wrote an article for *The New York Times Magazine* titled "What's the Matter with Eastern Kentucky?" She wrote that Clay County, just west of Letcher, "might as well be in a different country" because the median household income was \$22,296 and half the county was obese (Lowrey 2014). Lowrey also featured a proponent of community action, War on Poverty-like development, who said, "My view is that firms will never locate into a community with an unskilled labor force, unless the only labor they need is unskilled. And there has been a historic lack of investment in human capital in these areas." While the latter half is true, calling the

people of Eastern Kentucky “unskilled” is the result of a failure to recognize the area’s assets. The article ends by recommending people move out of the region to find jobs.

Building federal prisons is another strategy frequently implemented in Appalachia and in Eastern Kentucky. In March 2018, Representative Hal Rogers announced a \$500 million 700-acre prison to be built in Letcher County. Federal prisons are employed in hopes of economic revival because they create jobs and are permanent, but they are not as great as they seem. Lyndsey Gilpin, writer for *HuffPost*, cites a study from 2003 on prisons in New York. The study found prisons to bring few economic benefits to local communities, which “might be because local people aren’t hired, for example, or because prisons don’t make use of local business and instead buy from large corporations” (Gilpin 2018).

Geography isolates Letcher County. Internet providers limit residents of Letcher County by making it nearly impossible for them to acquire high-speed internet (Slavin 2017). Peter Slavin, journalist for *Yes! Magazine*, wrote 1% of Letcher County’s population had access to adequate broadband in 2017. Likewise, Emma Eisenberg, writer for *Vice*, says in rural regions, “the market is controlled by a single provider; without any competition, these companies have little incentive to improve or expand service and can set whatever prices they wish. In Appalachia, where service can also suffer because of the region’s mountainous topography, the issue is more urgent than ever amid uncertainty about what will replace coal as the area’s economic lifeline” (Eisenberg 2017a).

Distance is also a barrier within the county. Wanda Whitehead, co-founder of Revive Our Lower Letcher (ROLL) and Letcher County Culture Hub partner, lives on Route 7 in lower Letcher County where “you have to drive 12 miles just to get milk” (Whitehead 2019). This is a serious problem for those with disabilities and older folks with decreased mobility. Letcher

County is also one of the sickest places in the country. It is “ranked nearly the lowest in Kentucky for overall health factors and outcomes, including access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and resources are scarce to help feed young people and seniors” (Eisenberg 2017b).

In interviews with the researcher, Letcher County Culture Hub partners brought up additional stresses. Economic depression was an unavoidable topic. It has caused people to move away to “find happier lives” (Forbes 2019), and because the population is sparse, the community notices when people move away. There were several instances where business or activity in the county was threatened because there were not enough funds to sustain operations. With tax revenue from coal mining waning, the government cut funding for Letcher County’s community centers, money that went towards overhead expenses as well as programs for senior citizens. Community centers are some of the few public meeting spaces in the county, so their survival is imperative. Tensions with local sheriffs and the county judge were also brought up. The county judge was notoriously not a fan of the Culture Hub, and county politicians were mentioned as potential barriers to projects.

The survival of other organizations, like volunteer fire departments, was continually threatened. For instance, Kings Creek Volunteer Fire Department relies on fundraisers and out-of-pocket money to stay open. Nell Fields, president of the boards at Cowan Community Center and Appalshop, says insurance rates go up when fire departments are so many miles away (Fields 2018). In addition, fire departments in the county are the first responders. Without them, it would take much longer for help to arrive in dire situations.

Whitehead touched on issues of identity and recalled meeting her sister-in-law from Wisconsin for the first time. Her brother jokingly called himself a hillbilly but “to Wisconsin, a hillbilly is a recluse who doesn’t leave the mountains unless they have to” (Whitehead 2019).

When Whitehead's sister-in-law visited Letcher County for the first time, she thought it was absolutely beautiful. She was surprised she loved it so much because of the media's portrayal of Appalachia. Whitehead says she hates the movie *Coal Miner's Daughter*, a 1980 biographical film on country singer Loretta Lynn, because of the way it portrays Eastern Kentucky. The movie's portrayal—of coal camps, poverty, and moonshiners—gives a wide-span of viewers, many who have never visited Appalachia, a generalized image of the region.

Just like any place, there are political divides in Letcher County, and Appalshop is often perceived as going against the norms in Central Appalachia. In Letcher County, 79.8% of residents voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election (Fink 2017). Meanwhile, Appalshop is known as the left-leaning institution in downtown Whitesburg, recognized as the home of artists and hippies. Appalshop welcomes films on every topic and openly challenges extractive industries. One *Google* reviewer wrote: "Good venue for music and radio, to many leftists though." But just above this review is one of the many amazing ones, calling Appalshop "a hub of culture."

### Letcher County Culture Hub

#### Background

In 2014, a new generation of Appalshop leaders partnered with economists in the Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Project (EEGLP) at Lafayette College and researchers from Imagining America to launch a national initiative "for civic and economic development based in creative placemaking and placekeeping" ("The Story of Appalshop as Culture Hub" 2019). The initiative, known as Performing Our Future, is guided by two central questions:

*How can arts and culture promote individual voice and collective agency, unbounding a community's imagination and ambition in order to create the conditions for equitable economic and civic development?*

*What are the core organizing principles and practices that enable a community to overcome internal and external barriers and build an economy that's broad-based, equitable, and sustainable?*

Phase One of the initiative concentrated on development of the Letcher County Culture Hub, “a growing collaboration among for – and nonprofit businesses, community centers, artist and artisan organizations, business associations, volunteer fire departments, elected officials, government and educational organizations, and citizen-driven enterprises of all kinds, convened and facilitated by Appalshop community organizers.”

It is not hard to believe that the Culture Hub began as a Roadside Theater project. Fink, who is also a Roadside ensemble member, was invited to move to Whitesburg in 2015 to help manage Appalshop's development work. He set out to converse with people, starting with known community leaders, which is one of the first steps of Roadside's approach to *organizing*. Community leaders are not those with official titles, but those who can deliver a following. These one-to-one relational meetings, in collaboration with Donna Porterfield and other Roadside members, helped create a play about the search for a sustainable economic future in Letcher County. From these relational meetings, Fink noticed open-mindedness yet an absence of collaboration. People were not working together—partly because of distance, partly because of political or family divides—but Fink wanted to make use of the noticeable willingness within the community to inspire collaboration.

One of the first leaders Fink and Porterfield met with was Fields because of her leadership at Cowan Community Center, which had a standing relationship with Appalshop. In the meeting, Fields told Fink if he really wanted to reach everyone in the county, he had to talk

to her brother Bill Meade, chief of Kings Creek Fire Department and a strong believer in far-right politics. In conversation, Fink and Meade found mutual ground—they both loved hymns, were skeptics of county politics, and wanted to find ways for the community to run on its own.

In the researcher's interview with Meade, he talked about a three-day bluegrass music festival he used to host (Meade 2018). He said it brought thousands of people together, even those outside of the county. But tensions arose with the local sheriff who demanded Meade pay him off or the festival would be shut down, his reasoning being that Letcher County was a dry county. Each year, the sheriff upped the price, and Meade eventually stopped the festival. 30 years later and a bluegrass concert is what Meade told Fink he wanted to do and only needed \$300 for it. In speaking with Fink, he said Meade needed an “unbounding of the imagination” to “redefine what was possible” (Fink 2018) after being shut down by coercive power so many years ago.

After their meeting, Fink went back to Appalshop, convinced his colleagues to help after Meade fought them to keep his mining and logging businesses open, and got \$300 for Meade to put on a bluegrass concert. A couple weeks later, Meade's concert at the fire department came to fruition and was well attended. This was the start of a great friendship between Meade and Fink and the first of many collaborative efforts. Meade even played Harlan in Roadside's play *The Future of Letcher County* (written by Porterfield), which premiered on June 3, 2017 at Appalshop's annual Seedtime on the Cumberland Festival. In true Roadside fashion, Porterfield wrote the play from story circles and interviews, giving Meade and other community members a chance to openly share their authentic accounts of life in Letcher County.

From the start, Fink's work was completely relational. From the process of making *The Future of Letcher County* with Roadside through interviews, story circles, and other CCD

activities; supporting community leaders' projects and ideas; and simply “showing up” for the community by attending events, a shared desire to collaborate to find a sustainable future for the

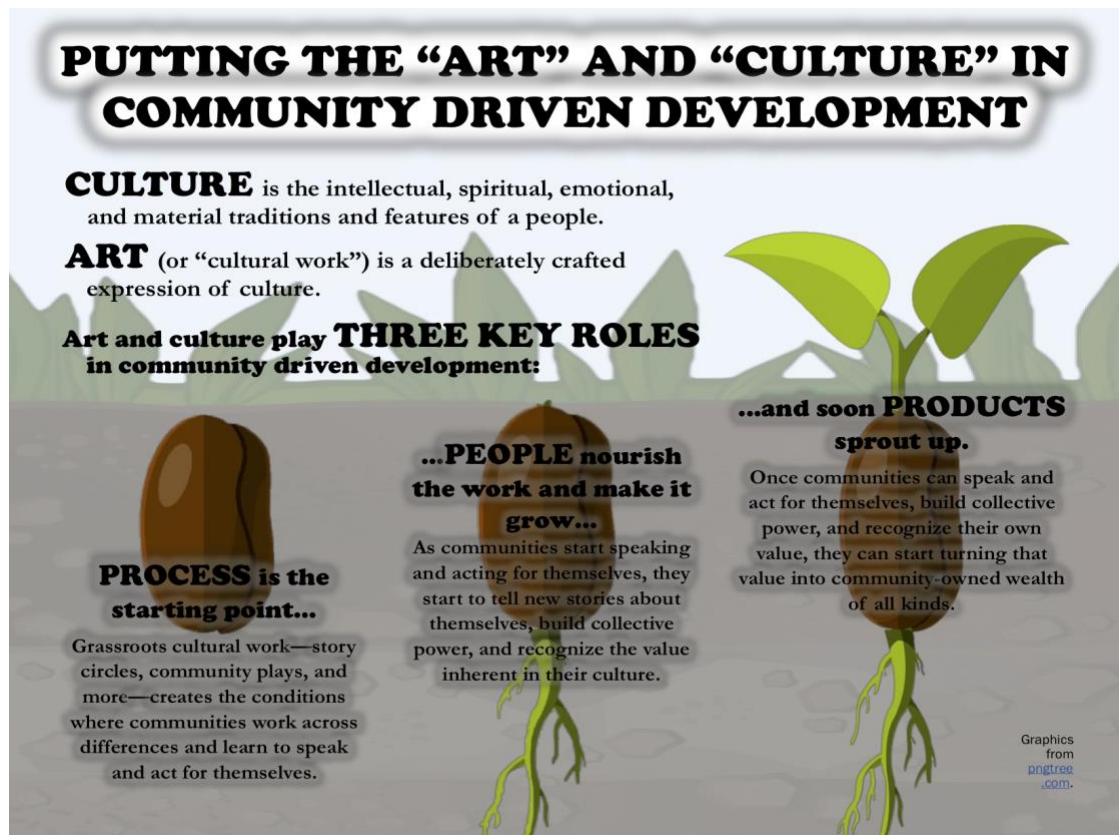


Figure 8. Art and Culture in Development (by Performing Our Future Lead Organizers 2018)

county became even more apparent (Fink 2018). Appalshop and EEGLP came up with the idea to build “an organization that can identify latent assets (especially cultural assets) and catalyze their transformation into community wealth” (“Appalshop-EEGLP working lexicon” 2018), what EEGLP director Fluney Hutchinson named a *culture hub*. The original conception of the organization involved four partners (Langston and Chang 2019). In a culture hub, arts and culture work simultaneously with people, process and products for a community cultural-driven development effort (see Fig. 8, “Art and Culture in Development” 2018).



In the culture hub model, assets are “everything a community or organization has, both physical and cultural, which has the potential to create value and community wealth,” and include:

- *Core assets*, central and well-established;
- *Foundational assets*, which undergird other assets—often deeply held cultural values;
- *Instrumental assets*, useful in commoditizing other assets;
- *Known/tangible assets*, which are already actively creating value and community wealth;
- *Latent assets*, which are not yet creating value and community wealth, and must be activated (“Appalshop-EEGLP working lexicon” 2018).

They underwent asset mapping, or *power mapping*, to “recognize and order” Letcher County’s assets “in order to better understand, cluster, and activate synergistic opportunities and create new value and community wealth.” Mapping connected the assets listed above by asking:

*What’s working in the community? What known/tangible assets does the community have that makes it thrive, that makes people want to live and be and stay there? Where is its value and wealth?*

*What’s not working yet, but could be? What foundational and latent assets does the community have that, if it can be bundled and clustered to create new kinds of synergies, will create new and increased value?*

In identifying known/tangible assets and finding foundational and latent assets to invigorate, more projects commenced. With an initial grant from ArtPlace, Appalshop had money to fund projects under the condition that they would continue to collaborate with them and other community partners. One of the first projects supported with this funding was with Gwen Johnson from Hemphill Community Center.

## Key Findings

Johnson's catering company is a perfect example of what Appalshop set out to accomplish in transitioning from a coal-based economy. Hemphill Community Center was on the verge of shutting down. Money from coal taxes was running out, and the county government decided they could no longer support community centers without it. Johnson sought out Fink at Meade's bluegrass concert. After meeting with Johnson, Fink discovered she wanted to start a catering company at Hemphill Community Center where she would employ Letcher County residents. Appalshop gave Johnson \$5,000 to start her catering company (Brown 2018) in a simple memorandum of understanding that Hemphill would continue collaborating with Appalshop and other community partners. Appalshop and Fink's social and financial support unbounded Johnson's imagination, and she came up with the idea "to build a brick oven in which they planned to bake bread using locally sourced and other healthful ingredients" (David 2018). Appalshop gave Johnson another \$15,000 to build the brick oven, which led to the incubation of Black Sheep Brick Oven Bakery in Hemphill Community Center. Black Sheep "offers work, ownership, and training opportunities to local residents" (Black Sheep 2019), including recovering addicts from the Letcher County



Figure 9. Black Sheep Brick Oven Bakery (2019)

Drug Court (Brown 2018). Johnson writes, "Hemphill Community Center believes these folks are a latent asset of the community" (Black Sheep 2019). Here, the community cultural-driven development model (see Fig. 8, "Art and Culture in Development" 2018) is in action:

Process: Through grassroots cultural work and relationship building, Fink discovered Johnson's desire to keep Hemphill Community Center running. Johnson attended Meade's first bluegrass concert and sought Fink out.

People: Appalshop nourished Johnson by supporting her ideas. Support unbounded her imagination which led to projects that mobilize both known assets (ex. locally sourced ingredients) and latent assets (ex. formerly-incarcerated individuals).

Product: Black Sheep invigorates Letcher County culture by keeping Hemphill Community Center open. Hemphill has numerous free and low-priced music, dance, and food events. Black Sheep also contributes to the local economy by employing local folks, using locally sourced ingredients in their food, and being a locally owned, revenue-generating business.

The Letcher County Culture Hub grew immensely from the first projects with Meade and Johnson and is currently an organization of 20 partners, guided by the principle *we own what we make* (see Fig. 10, "Letcher County Culture Hub" 2018, and Appendix 3). In the current structure, Culture Hub partners are part of an organized community group, formal or informal. To receive funding, partners submit applications to the *partnership fund* to be reviewed by the Culture Hub's leadership, who then makes a recommendation to the larger group before voting commences. This leadership group is called the *Leadership SubHub* and includes the lead organizer, who is employed by Appalshop, and six partners in the organization. Those in the Leadership SubHub are guaranteed \$2,500 for their own organization annually. The Culture Hub garners support from both regional and national collaborators and investors as well as Appalshop. The Culture Hub meets every month while the Leadership SubHub meets more often as needed.

The researcher made many discoveries from the interviews she conducted. First, growth in size was possible for a few reasons: the intentional relationship building (a primary component of community organizing) done by Fink; shared community trust in Appalshop and the Culture

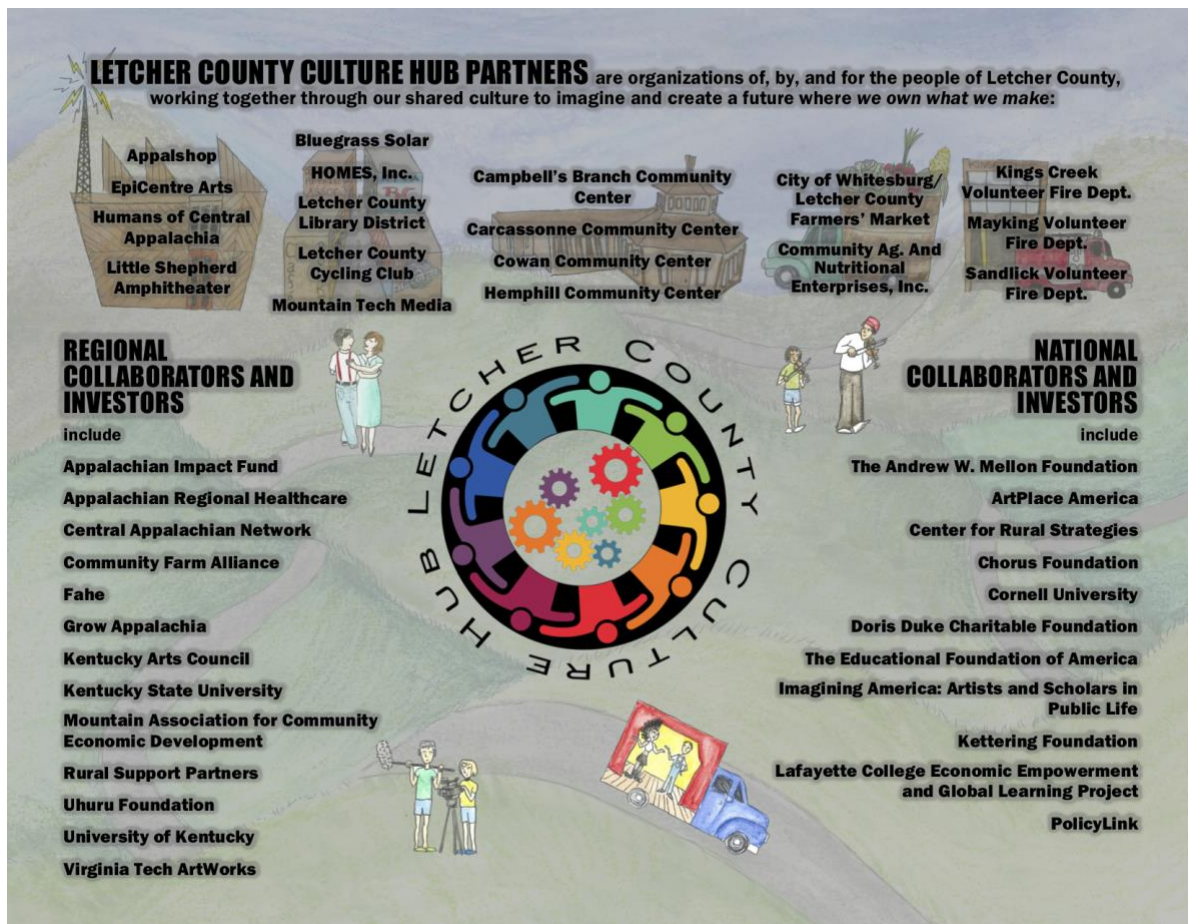


Figure 10. Letcher County Culture Hub (by Culture Hub Lead Organizers 2018)

Hub, catalyzed by people seeing the organization and its partners' accomplishments; and natural entry for those who had existing relationships with Culture Hub partners and Appalshop.

For Valerie Horn, it was “natural” to become a Culture Hub partner with the Community Farm Alliance, Letcher County Farmer’s Market, and Community Agricultural Nutrition Enterprises (CANE) (Horn 2018). She serves on the board at Cowan Community Center as secretary, which was in the first iteration of the Culture Hub because of the relationship Fink established with Fields. Additionally, Horn was connected to Appalshop prior to joining the

Culture Hub as a supporter of the organization and from Appalshop's collaborations with Cowan Community Center's Cowan Creek Mountain Music School.

Unlike Horn, joining the Culture Hub was not completely natural for Whitehead because of her past views on Appalshop: "At one time, I was under the impression they were tree huggers, the hippies, free and easy" (Whitehead 2019). She originally joined the Culture Hub as part of Route 7 Artisan Fellowship, hoping to find ways to promote local artists. However, the founders left and the group disbanded. But Whitehead met her current collaborator, Malcom, while on a retreat with the Culture Hub. Malcom and Whitehead started ROLL together. ROLL is a grassroots organization in lower Letcher County that focuses on "building and reviving arts, culture and economic development in communities whose highways access Route 7" ("Revive Our Lower Letcher" 2019). ROLL is still a Culture Hub partner, and Whitehead feels like she has Appalshop to thank for much of the good in her life right now.

Mike Caudill joined the Culture Hub after seeing potential for his organization. Caudill was elected to the board at Carcassonne Community Center, and in having the Center's best interest at heart, accepted the Culture Hub's proposal to become a partner. He did so out of need, saying, "Initial funding allowed us (Carcassonne Community Center) to stop the downward slide of our bank account" (Caudill 2019).

Second, support from the Culture Hub made it possible for partners to start, continue, or expand their organizations and programs. Support comes from funding as well as the reciprocal relationships between partners.

In summer 2019, Cowan Community Center will present its second Levitt AMP Whitesburg Music Series on the Mountain Heritage Festival Stage. The Levitt Foundation decides to support organizations' proposals based on a public voting system, where the top 18

nonprofits win a \$25,000 matching grant to bring free concerts to their town. In discussing Whitesburg's first Levitt AMP music festival, which occurred in summer 2018, Fields said support from Culture Hub partners helped Cowan win the grant. Partners voted for Cowan and shared the voting link on their organization's Facebook pages and on their personal accounts (Fields 2018). In addition, the director of HOMES, Inc. refloored the Mountain Heritage Festival Stage at no cost beyond materials, saving Cowan upwards of \$5,000 (Horn 2018). The Whitesburg Music Series increases tourism and, in bringing activity to downtown Whitesburg, increases revenue for local businesses. In addition, it creates an opportunity for the Letcher County Farmer's Market, which sets up during the festival, giving local farmers an additional opportunity to sell their produce. Horn says sales undoubtedly increase during the festival.

Horn is involved in a tremendous amount of local agricultural work and is a great representative of the Culture Hub's principles. The Farmer's Market employs local musicians to perform each week and gives artists an opportunity to sell their work ("Accomplishments" 2016). Revenue for farmers increased from \$6,000 to \$136,000 in just a few years, and the market went from having six farmers to 40 (Horn 2018). With support from Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation (MCHC), the University of Kentucky, Wellcare Insurance, Lab Corp., and a federal Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant (Eisenberg 2017b), Horn started a "Farmacy"—a fruit and vegetable prescription program that provides patients with diet-related diseases access to free produce. Horn said, "The intent was not to be a poor person's market, but to be a market for everyone" (Eisenberg 2017b). And her work does not stop there. In 2015, MCHC bought a former high school, just up the road from Appalshop, for CANE to lease for \$1 a year. With additional funding from Appalshop and the Brook T. Smith Foundation, matched by a grant from the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, CANE built a kitchen to

be a health hub, which opened in late 2018. Horn hopes the kitchen can serve multiple purposes and provide a space for growers to add value to their product (Horn 2018). At CANE, you can find people making soap and apple butter, taking a cooking class, eating meals together, and cooks experimenting through a new chef-in-residence program.

The connections formed among Culture Hub partners is what Whitehead considers to be one of the greatest parts of being a part of the organization. Living along Route 7, Whitehead was not previously acquainted with a lot of the other partner organizations, such as the Farmer's Market. From this connection, she started bringing art to the market on Saturdays (Whitehead 2019). In general, "the support of the group as a whole, the shoulder to lean on, the person to bounce something off of and ask "Do you think this will work?" means so much to Whitehead personally, to ROLL, and to the weekly jams she hosts at a once underutilized park in lower Letcher. With support provided by the Culture Hub's partnership fund, Whitehead purchased a sound system and generators to bring power to the park and can now book artists from around the area to perform. Partners from the Culture Hub attend her jams, which is huge for lower Letcher because they want to draw attention to this distant part of the county. With attention initiated from jams and other projects, Whitehead sees a future for economic development in lower Letcher, hoping people will realize, "This place has things going on! Maybe I want to open a small restaurant or something here."

For Cumberland Mountain Arts and Crafts Council, funding from the Culture Hub enabled the organization to stay open (Sturgill and Amburgey 2019). Deborah "Deb" Sturgill and Don Amburgey from Cumberland Mountain Arts said "this boost helped get us on our feet and we were able to start learning how to get things to sustain ourselves." In addition, the Culture Hub helped the organization build relationships within the community and "lay roots toward

other organizations.” With this new-found support, Sturgill and Amburgey are finding other resources right in their own community, thinking bigger, and realizing “that no vision is impossible and a lack of money does not have to halt progress.”

Moreover, the Culture Hub has benefitted Letcher County on many levels. Whitehead says she has grown personally from being in the Culture Hub:

*I’ve never been a shy person...but when it came to expressing my opinions on something or saying no, I can’t do that, or yes, let’s do this...I have experienced personal growth as far as confidence. I actually feel like I have something worthwhile to say. I finally found my voice as far as leadership (Whitehead 2019).*

Zelma Forbes from Hemphill Community Center agrees with Whitehead: “It has given me the opportunity for leadership and to learn how community organizations work. I enjoy the work and my relationships with the people involved” (Forbes 2019). Whitehead has seen others come into their own, too. During a friend’s stint in the Leadership SubHub, she saw them go from being quiet and shy to “full-on leading Culture Hub meetings” (Whitehead 2019). Likewise, Sturgill from Cumberland Mountain Arts writes:

*It has helped us feel welcome and important to our community, even though we are lacking some pieces in our organization. Helps us learn to work together to reach larger goals which may be more difficult alone. I am learning a great deal about how to work together with other small groups. We all feel great inspiration to continue to work and develop tourism for the local area (Sturgill and Amburgey 2019).*

For Caudill, the Culture Hub is more about organizational and community growth. Aside from keeping the doors of Carcassonne Community Center open, the Culture Hub increases regular attendance at events because partners go with their friends and family, and when people come to the area to learn about the Culture Hub, they often attend Carcassonne’s square dances. In addition, the partnership fund helped the Center improve its infrastructure including its sound system, building security, and insulation. As for the entire community, Caudill writes:



*Since our organization serves our community, by allowing us to continue to operate, the LCCH (Letcher County Culture Hub) has provided a service to the community. The volunteerism has increased greatly, and with every upgrade we make to the center, community support grows. We now have designated funds for our July Firework display, our sewing club, and our sound system. Previously, folks came to the center to take. Now, they bring food to our public meals and volunteer their labor (Caudill 2019).*

Similarly, Amburgey and Sturgill say the Culture Hub gave them a new perspective and showed them “how special our culture is and how to take steps to preserve, enhance, and turn it into an economic model to sustain ourselves” (Sturgill and Amburgey 2019).

It is apparent that everyone involved in the Culture Hub sees development and progress as a team effort. The connections formed from being a part of the organization and the support shown for one another is accomplishing Appalshop’s distinctive vision of using culture to promote individual voice and collective agency. This unbounds the community’s imagination in order to create the conditions for equitable development. Sturgill and Amburgey revealed this in their interview:

*The small organizations are showing the existing government agencies that we can and will do these things with or without their help. However, it would work so much better if we all work from the same understanding. We have so much power together. They will not be a barrier to our goal. Maybe, when they see movement in our organizations working together and making positive gains, then they will get on board and other community stakeholders can see direct benefits and join us. All the community groups can do so much together, judges, doctors, lawyers, opioid crisis groups, CEOs, etc (Sturgill and Amburgey 2019).*

The power, voice, and agency found in Letcher County can also be seen in the Culture Hub’s agenda for sustainability. In an attempt to combat rising energy costs and Kentucky Power’s “new demand charge rates that place further strain on our cash-strapped community facilities,” four Culture Hub organizations—Hemphill Community Center, Kings Creek Volunteer Fire Department, HOMES, Inc., and Appalshop—are going solar with assistance from the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) (Gibson et al.

2019). These new solar energy systems, like so many of the Culture Hub's projects, are a response to an undesirable situation. Culture Hub partners claim solar power will "stabilize and reduce our electricity bills over time and help us to be more efficient with the energy we produce and use. Overall, these projects reflect over \$500,000 of long-term investment in critical community institutions—the largest renewable energy project in the history of Letcher County."

Another big policy push for the Culture Hub is related to increasing the county's access to high-speed internet. In 2017, a group of Letcher County residents formed the Letcher County Broadband Board to find a way to create their own broadband network (Eisenberg 2017a). Staffers from the Culture Hub partner Mountain Tech Media, "a cooperatively-owned tech and media corporation housed at Appalshop" ("Accomplishments" 2016), were on the board when it was founded. Mountain Tech's Chief technology officer, Izzy Broomfield, said "the company struggles under the weight of the current broadband situation, especially network failures and slow speeds" (Eisenberg 2017a). The board wanted hard data for their advocacy efforts, so they surveyed the area and found that 600 households in Linefork, located in lower Letcher, were underserved by internet providers. Now, the board is working with partners to expand the necessary infrastructure to increase broadband service in the county, and phase one of the project was recently approved by the Fiscal Court.

### The Future of the Culture Hub

The Culture Hub is just getting started. Current partners are excited about the Culture Hub's growth and look forward to further collaboration. What the Culture Hub has accomplished thus far only gives partners hope for the economic and cultural future they can build together. With growth, Whitehead hopes more attention will be brought to the group. Locally, attention can make people say, "Hey, I want to be a part of that group, or even if I am not, I want to find

ways to help the people in the group” (Whitehead 2019). On a larger scale, Whitehead wants more attention brought to the Culture Hub to infiltrate negative media and bring more people to Letcher County.

With growth, current partners are making realizations about the Culture Hub, the problems Letcher County faces, and their roles within the organization. A couple people noted the difficulty of finding trust in a group when the history of the county tells them not to. Horn wants to see more real collaboration in the future, which can only come from building trust within the group (Horn 2018). She wants to continue to make gains because “all the things that kept us separate and apart before are still present.” Horn also noted the inherent fear of scarcity, “that there is just a little and we all need a lot,” and wants to continue to find ways to “share the wealth and trust there can be enough for all of us.”

Forbes made a realization about the Culture Hub’s organizational structure, saying the current guidelines for becoming a partner are “exclusionary for many people that would like to meet and be identified as full members of the hub without being associated with one of the partners... There are folks that would like to participate that are not members of a “non-profit” organization. I think the guidelines for membership should be changed to include these folks as well” (Forbes 2019). It should be noted that organizations are not required to be a nonprofit. Any organized community group working under the Culture Hub’s shared vision can join. Steps for clarification within the organization are being taken.

Caudill sees the value he can add to the group: “I feel our main duty to the group is to make Carcassonne as successful as possible, and if the Culture Hub is praised for their part in that, I have no problem. I also feel that as a senior member, I can offer insights based on my education and experience, and help the group organize their priorities” (Caudill 2019).

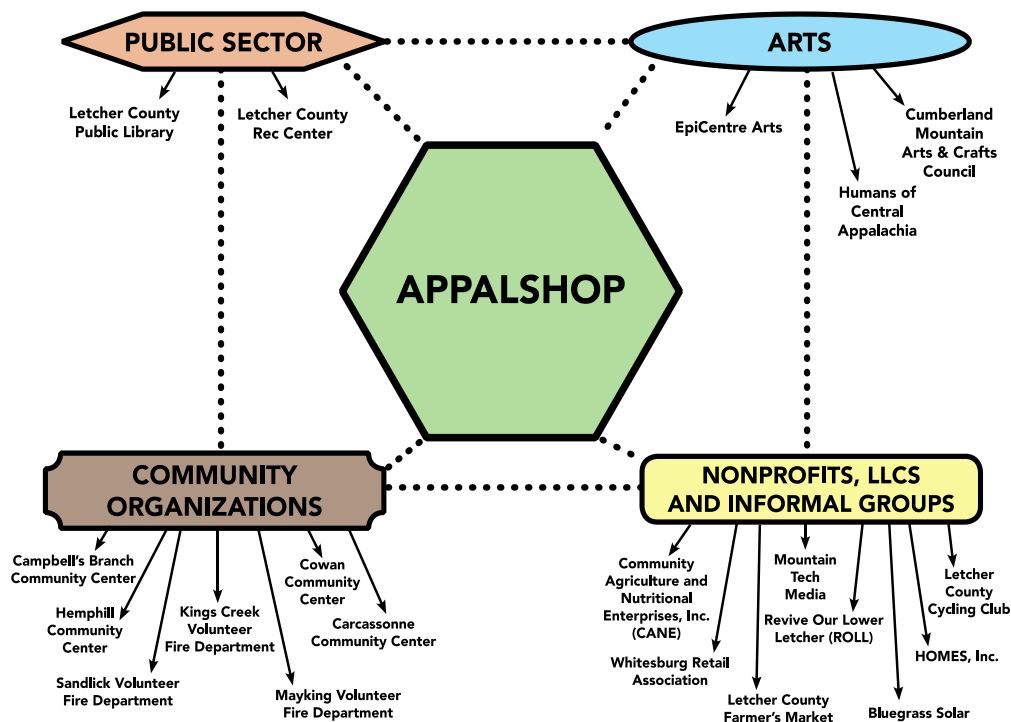


Figure 11. Culture Hub Organizational Web (Art by Emily Hunt, Concept by Jaime Paige Pierce 2019)

From the lessons learned over the past few years, the organization is taking steps towards growth. For example, the Leadership SubHub is currently redefining the guidelines to apply for project support from the partnership fund. In addition, with a new lead organizer, there are obviously going to be some organizational changes. The new lead organizer of the Culture Hub, Annie Jane Cotten, started in October of 2018. She carries the essential principles of organizing, viewing her primary duties as relationship building, continuously learning and assessing assets, and identifying what community members need (Cotten 2019). Cotten is committed to looking at

the bigger picture and is making a strategic plan to map the organization's next steps. Another priority for Cotten is assessing what skills and trainings people might be interested in, with the goal of "equalizing the playing field, and even building connections between groups." For instance, if one group is good at grant writing, they can help other organizations write proposals and develop skills for the future.

The Culture Hub is in it for the long-haul and continues to garner support because of it. It is a part of PolicyLink's Arts, Culture, Equitable Development Initiative which, with support from the Kresge Foundation, is working to "expand the impact of six community based organizations across the US in equitable development and policy change through arts and culture" (Langston and Chang 2019). Additional support for fiscal year 2018 came from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Educational Foundation of America, Central Appalachian Network, and MCHC. The synergy between partners, supporters, and collaborators is yielding great accomplishments and only gets stronger as the organization grows.

### Performing Our Future (POF)

From being a part of Appalshop, EEGLP, and Imagining America's national initiative Performing Our Future, the Culture Hub is contributing to the advancement of a community cultural-driven development strategy based in voice, agency, and ownership. The coalition learned three major lessons from the first phase of Performing Our Future. First, they learned to "focus on ownership and belonging" ("Three Major Lessons Learned" 2018). In Letcher County, the question "Who owns the value created by this work?" came up often. Performing Our Future organizers assert that the dominant paradigm of development "presumes a process driven from the top—by those in leadership positions in government, business, and large nonprofit anchor institutions—and seeks to put "artists at the table," i.e., to legitimize the contributions of artists

alongside others in the existing power structure.” But *Performing Our Future* flips the script where “the work is owned and controlled by large numbers of poor, working-class, and middle-class residents (the majority in most communities), who organize themselves through arts and cultural work linked to economic development efforts. Government, business, and other large-scale stakeholders play an important role, but the terms are reversed: instead of these institutions engaging the community, the community engages them, as equal partners in a democratic and citizen-led process.” Likewise, they discovered ownership and belonging to be closely related—where the real problems with gentrification and displacement were not necessarily from bringing wealth to poor areas. Rather, the real problem was the lack of control among locals regarding “how that wealth is created and deployed.”

The second lesson learned from Phase One of *Performing Our Future* was to “go deep, then go broad.” Initially, the plan was for Phase One to include three sites in different areas, but they realized resources would be spread too thin. Instead, organizers decided to “go deep” by investing heavily in Letcher County and are now “going broad,” applying the knowledge learned from Phase One with the Culture Hub to development projects in other communities. Lastly, they learned “community organizing is critical”:

*The challenges of turning community-led art into community-led economic development require organizing skills: forging public relationships, negotiating the self-interest of a broad range of partners, creating a network powerful enough to launch a successful grassroots development process, and building communities’ capacity to take over leadership of the network...The synthesis of arts and organizing will be critical to weaving the specificity of local stories into a shared narrative—which will demonstrate how culture can move from the margins to the center of community and economic development; and how artists can help create communities where all voices are heard, all assets are recognized, and all needs are valued.*

Now in Phase Two of the initiative, besides Letcher County, communities from the Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi, the inner city of West Baltimore, rural California and Wisconsin, and the urban Rust Belt of Milwaukee and New York—who have all faced oppression and economic and cultural exploitation—are represented in Performing Our Future. Coalition organizers said in a recent statement that they are “a national, multiracial, rural-urban, grassroots-led coalition working through culture to build power toward a future where we own what we make” (“POF Statement” 2018). Informed by Roadside’s methodology, they contend: “Our most formidable resistance has been rooted in our cultures—in the expression of our intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material traditions.” Accordingly, Performing Our Future’s

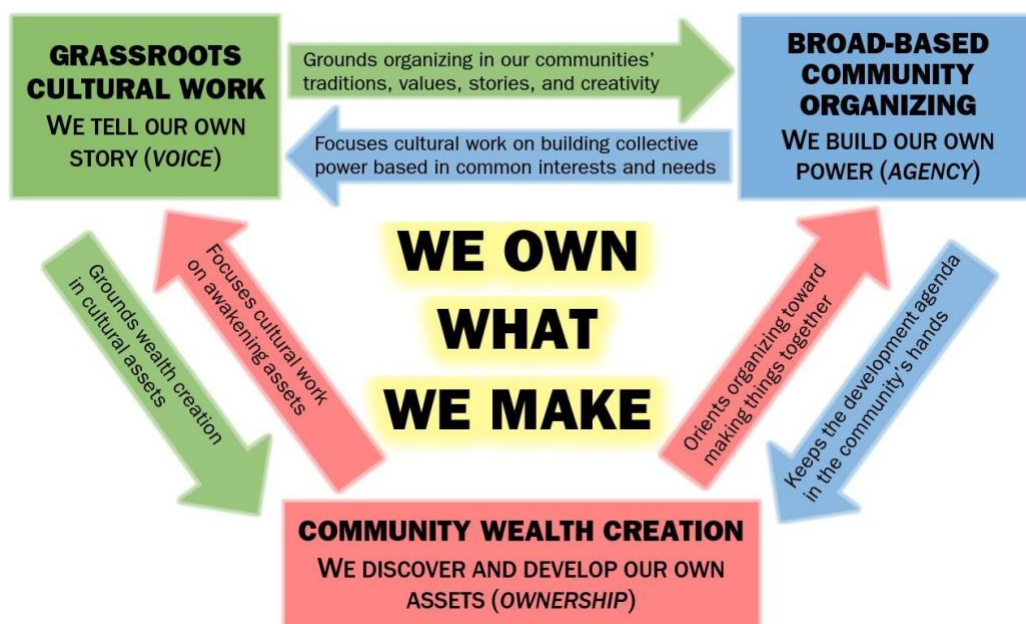


Figure 12. How We Work (by Performing Our Future Lead Organizers 2019)

development strategies spur from the coalition’s belief that “a culture of bottom-up collective power and interdependence drives equitable development and counters the culture of top-down administration and dependency that drives exploitative development.”

In practice, Performing Our Future supports projects in coalition members' communities; engages in joint efforts to learn and create together and enable collaboration among community leaders; leads policy-change efforts; assembles resources to employ full-time organizers in each of the represented communities and provide seed funding for projects; develops methods for evaluation; and documents and shares methods, skills, theories, histories, and expertise on a public media platform. The current model is evolving through continued learning and practice and "emphasizes flow and synergy between and among grassroots cultural work, broad-based community organizing, and community wealth creation."

In this populist model, cultural expression becomes a means to "imagine and work toward a future where everyone belongs and everyone's contribution matters" (see Fig. 12, "How We Work" 2019). Performing Our Future implements Roadside's CCD practice as its central model for inclusion in a diversity strategy that "understands race, gender, and other modes of oppression to be inseparable from class." With this in mind, matters of discrimination are discussed in the same dialogue as economic exploitation. Isolation is also accepted as a hindering force to economic and cultural transitions. Organizers "hold that artists and cultural workers, drawn from their communities, are in a unique position to combat isolationism and foster diversity and inclusion." Local artists' knowledge of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material traditions and expertise can be used to enliven cultural traditions in order to "create the conditions for communities to develop their collective agency and voice."

Furthermore, trust is essential to Performing Our Future's approach—to the organizing process, the formation of something like a culture hub, and its growth and sustainability. With the Letcher County Culture Hub, trust was not necessarily there from the start. Members of the community were skeptical about Appalshop and what the institution supported. This could easily



inhibit the effort from ever getting off the ground. However, in Appalshop's case, development flourished out of the relationships built by Fink, which is why having the right person in the lead organizer position is so important. If the lead organizer cannot unite the community around a shared vision for the future and develop a strong network of partners, a culture hub or similar organized effort will not be possible. In any place that has faced oppression and economic and cultural exploitation, gaining the community's trust is not easy. Even after getting them on board, there is still the matter of maintaining people's confidence. Partners can fear there are not enough resources to spread around to everyone and truly sustain the effort.

Performing Our Future's democratic organizing process mitigates these factors. The coalition's "Guide to Democratic Populist Development" (2019) lists the steps to organizing a community, which are all informed by Fink's work with the Letcher County Culture Hub, Roadside's CCD practice, EEGLP and Imagining America's research, and Appalshop's commitment to populist development. Organizing starts by assembling a *planning team* with an anchor institution and a lead organizer at the core. The team makes a *power map* that identifies community institutions, individuals, and initiatives and how they are connected. Next, the planning team finds where communities are already organizing themselves—usually free spaces and community centers—and builds strong relationships with their leaders. Again, leaders are not those with official titles but those who can deliver a following and encourage leadership from others. The lead organizer conducts one-to-one relational meetings with those leaders, asking questions and sharing stories in order to identify mutual self-interests including cultural values, material needs, and spiritual desires. It is the planning team's job to make space for those leaders to express themselves and the community's culture through music, dance, stories, food, etc. Cultural expression enables ideas to emerge, and every idea is a good one as long as the project

“comes from partners’ own values and interests; grows the community’s capacity for collective voice, agency, and ownership; and works toward building community wealth, directly or not.” Performing Our Future organizers also advise keeping art/cultural work in the projects so they are “grounded, reflective, imaginative, and inclusive.” This is also where the team can start building a collectively owned and managed *partnership fund*.

Organizing does not stop there. The effort is sustained by fostering relationships and projects. New partners who see themselves reflected in the work should always be welcome. Regular meetings can keep partners connected and accountable. They can invite each other to gatherings, deepening connections and support. Lastly, partners should be encouraged through leadership opportunities. Combined, these steps to organizing a community can all aid in achieving sustainability. When the community is galvanized to do the work, assets will not go unnoticed. Likewise, when the community is organized into a strong network based on mutual support, interests, and a shared vision, power will ensue.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Summary

Places in America face problems due to the shifting economic and cultural landscape. In rural places, jobs are scarce because of deindustrialization. In urban cities, the cost of living is higher than most people can afford. As research shows, community participation has declined since the 1960s (Putnam 2000) and people are more isolated (McPherson et al 2006). The technological age we live in sustains this by keeping people in their homes and away from human connection.

While what is considered to be a part of the creative economy varies depending on who is doing the research, all arguments position the creative and cultural industries as important economic contributors. If a creative economy is attained, that place can attract new industries and residents, leading to greater economic growth (Kleiman 2002). Several advocates for the economic power of creative industries and workers are in favor of people being in close proximity (Rushton 2013), referring to cities as “cauldrons of human creativity” (Creative Class Group 2019). But more researchers in the field now realize the value of arts and culture in rural places, suggesting they put resources into small, local arts organizations, galleries, and other cultural entities rather than spend large sums of money bringing new businesses to town (Florida 2018).

Arts-based community development not only utilizes art to initiate economic growth, but also to educate and inform people about themselves and the world, inspire and mobilize individuals, nurture and heal communities, and build community capacity and infrastructure (Cleveland 2011). Creative community building is specifically designed to bring people from

various professions together to build and rebuild the social, civic, physical, economic, and spiritual fabrics of communities (Borrap 2006). Similarly, creative placemaking brings partners from across sectors together through creative initiatives in hopes of achieving a place-based change. Creative placemaking can take many forms and accomplish various outcomes: it can serve diversity by encouraging cultural expression (Schupbach and Ball 2016); give people more job opportunities by diversifying the economy (Bennett 2014); increase spending locally by attracting more people to an area (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010), which can also improve public safety (Bennett 2014); and serve livability “by offering social activities and improving an area’s aesthetics.” Successful creative placemaking starts with a vision, demonstrates commitment to the distinctive character of a place, mobilizes the public around the vision, garners private sector support, includes active participation from arts and cultural leaders who share their resources and expertise, and succeeds in bringing partners from across sectors and from different levels of government together to increase opportunity and power (Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus 2010). However, with growth, creative placemaking’s shortcomings have come to light. It can exclude grassroots organizations and local people; turn into placetaking by institutions; and ignore the local culture and history of a place and its people (Nicodemus 2018).

Asset-based development is a response to dominant deficiency models (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993) that are based on a place’s liabilities. Entities with power institute a top-down strategy where they implement programs to fix the problem, leaving communities self-critical and dependent upon these programs. When an institution, the government, or some other outside entity does work *to* a community rather than *with* the local citizenry, tensions emerge. Differently, asset-based community development is a “planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life” (Green and Haines 2012). Unlike

traditional development models, assets expand to include physical, human, social, financial, environmental, political, and cultural capital. Asset mapping is a tool for recognizing community resources, which can begin by identifying the gifts and skills of individuals within the community, active community groups, and private and public institutions (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). An additional approach to this is community visioning, which strives to establish a shared community vision through public participation (Green and Haines 2012). Essentially, this process highlights current assets instead of dwelling on absences (Lewis 2009).

For years, corporations and federal agencies have owned the majority of land and resources in Appalachia. These owners extracted wealth for their own benefit and left the region with a mono-economy reliant on a single industry. Dependency is most evident in areas known for their abundant natural resources, such as Eastern Kentucky. The practices of the coal industry were particularly abusive. In supporting owners and their wealth, the government only contributed to the unfair treatment and conditions inflicted upon miners and their families. All of this contributed to Appalachian poverty, which was put on the national stage when President Johnson launched his War on Poverty campaign from the Fletcher home in Martin County, KY. Journalists and reporters flocked to Appalachia to capture the “white hillbilly” image (Sarnoff 2008), one of backwardness, opposition to progress, inferiority, and crumbling structures.

People in Appalachia have been “overwhelmed by a master narrative and economic development projects in which they play the poor country cousin awaiting cultural enlightenment and expert assistance” (Keefe 2009). Most economic development in Appalachia is about creating a “favorable business climate” (Lewis 2009), one where people work for low wages and there are few laws and regulations regarding resource extraction. Other development in the region, such as the OEO and CAP’s programs, assumed giving individuals attention and

resources to pull themselves out of poverty would help, and never tackled the structures and systems that created distress in Appalachia in the first place.

Participatory development practices, which place real value on community contributions and resources, are disrupting top-down development in Appalachia. People are involved every step of the way, from research to decision-making to priority setting, which is a “a prerequisite for long-term sustainability and effectiveness of community development initiatives” (Keefe 2009). Participatory development values sustainability; encourages personal development by giving people opportunities to learn new skills; is inclusive of the entire citizenry; is culture-based in that it does not destroy but encourages local creativity and culture; and starts with local resources, valuing them as important assets (Lewis 2009).

Social capital is a key ingredient for public participation and collective decision making. Appalachia’s culture is rich with artistic traditions, which can preserve social capital in the region. Traditions and arts activities can bridge the gap between generations; promote expression to develop personal and collective identity; and provide opportunities for interaction (McGrath and Brennan 2011). Likewise, Appalachian communities feature systems of mutual obligation. The power of reciprocity can advantage development, but first, the person leading it needs to build relationships with community members. This can be done through rapport building activities, working at the community pace of life rather than against it, and making it clear that community contributions, both in decision making and projects, are desired (LaLone 2009). Practitioners who do not see the value of building relationships in the community “need to weigh the detriments of having a project fail because the community did not trust you, was offended by your actions, or quietly refused to cooperate.”

In the case study, a cultural institution in a community that has faced oppression and economic and cultural exploitation is formulating a civic and economic development strategy “based in creative placemaking and placekeeping” (“The Story of Appalshop as Culture Hub” 2019). Appalshop’s development work stems from its history in creating opportunities for artists in the region and Roadside’s CCD methodology, which organizes the community to build a network of collective power and opportunity. Organizing can begin with story circles as an inclusive way to encourage community participation in the form of reflection, sharing, listening, and coming to collective realizations. Likewise, the lead organizer can have one-to-one relational meetings with community leaders in order to identify mutual self-interests. Support unbounds people’s imaginations, and they start to formulate and share ideas from which projects emerge.

### Recommendations

Arts-based community development and creative placemaking reveal the value of the arts in bolstering economies, encouraging civic participation, increasing and diversifying shared cultural knowledge and perspectives, connecting partners across sectors, and improving the aesthetics of a place. Arts activities “provide novel opportunities for expression and creativity; they reinforce and build social capital; they facilitate connections across urban and regional boundaries; they help to construct quality public spaces; and they provide educational opportunities for residents” (Nowak 2007). With all of these known benefits, art should be used to strengthen initiatives intended to better communities. Likewise, artists as “natural place-makers” who can uncover, express, and repurpose assets, should be incorporated into development strategies.

Communities are always going to face problems, and there will often be foundations, institutions, and agencies ready to lend a helping hand. However, research shows that efforts to

mitigate these problems can create additional issues. Strategies formulated from problem-oriented data where large institutions, foundations, and/or the government design and implement programs to address the deficiencies in a community take power away from the people, forge tensions, and leave them self-critical. Power struggles and domination are apparent in Appalachia. In Central Appalachia, poverty is sustained by economic development that supports absentee ownership, resource exploitation, and wealth extraction. Appalachian poverty is put on display in the media, portraying people as poor and inferior.

Cultural expression through the participation in and production of art by the people actually living in a place is the best defense to the imposed Appalachian identity. But arts opportunities are not always easy to find in rural mountain communities. Artists flock to urban places for opportunities. When creative economy research supports the close proximity of individuals and calls cities “cauldrons of human creativity” (Creative Class Group 2019), while creative placemaking revitalizes downtowns with attractive cultural districts and artist live/work spaces, there are naturally going to be more opportunities for artists in these places. In addition, more arts nonprofits can survive in metropolitan areas because there is a greater market for their work. Likewise, more funding from wealthy individual donors, foundations, and government agencies is available to nonprofit arts organizations in these cities. These funders like to support arts organizations with impactful arts education and community engagement programs, and arts organizations follow suit with their programming.

Rural communities have seen less creative placemaking and arts-based community development efforts, whereas arts and culture have long been a part of urban revitalization. However, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) partnered with the NEA and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies to produce “Rural Prosperity



Through the Arts and Creative Sector: A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States,” released in January 2019. The guide “offers creative policy solutions that draw on home-grown arts and cultural assets to address the urgent problems facing rural America” (Rood 2019). In targeting governors and state governments, the NGA amalgamated their findings into a Rural Systems Change Framework, providing governors and leadership in rural states with their five key roles in arts-based rural development. These roles include offering leadership for the state’s creative sector, capitalizing on existing cultural assets, building the infrastructure for cultural and creative partnerships with other policy areas, developing local human capital with creative skills, and creating the environment for investment and innovation. In sum, they found a few key principles for arts-based rural development:

- Creative sector initiatives are most effective when attuned to the particular creative assets and needs of rural communities.
- Creative sector initiatives work best as part of a cohesive economic development plan in rural areas.
- Creative sector initiatives add value when integrated with additional state and local policies and practices such as workforce development, community development and housing.

Some of the aforementioned suggestions and principles for rural arts-based development are present in the case study—only Appalshop, a nonprofit arts and cultural institution, is the one enacting local change, not the Governor of Kentucky. The Letcher County Culture Hub is inherently attuned to the creative assets and needs of the community because community members are the ones actually doing the work. The Culture Hub is part of a cohesive economic development plan that addresses ownership and agency by creating the conditions for partners to

generate local wealth. And the creative sector is present every step of the way, from an arts and cultural institution initiating the effort to the initial relationship building associated with making Roadside's play, *The Future of Letcher County*, to the continuous financial and social support for partners' arts activities. Most importantly, *local* artists and people are the ones contributing to *placekeeping* through the expression of *local* culture.

Appalshop gives artists and creatives alike a place to innovate and produce work despite being in a rural place. Appalshop is different, not just because they have to be because of their location, but because they want to be. In a keynote presentation given by Fink at Rural Talks to Rural 2018, he talks about how, at Appalshop, they do not talk about community engagement or community service. Instead, the leaders and organizers at Appalshop are a part of the community and see their job as working with their neighbors (Fink 2018). Appalshop has used their position in the mountains to grow immensely over the past 50 years. The organization cares to create opportunities for local artists to keep them in Appalachia and does so without ever censoring their work. Appalshop gives artists a platform to create what they want, say what they want, and disseminates their work through multiple channels, including an online streaming service and the largest archive of Appalachian media. Essentially, the organization give creatives in the region an opportunity to tell their story and not have someone else tell it for them.

Asset-based development challenges a liability-based strategy. Projects begin with asset mapping or power mapping where inventory of community capacity is taken, including individuals, community organizations, and other community groups. In Appalshop, EEGLP, and Imagining America's community cultural-driven development model, power mapping reflects the assertion of Alan Lomax, folk artist and founder of the Association for Cultural Equity, that every community's culture has "inherent genius" to discover ("Appalshop-EEGLP working

lexicon” 2018). Asset mapping seeks to discover known/tangible assets, or what makes the community thrive; core assets and foundational assets, which are often deeply held cultural values; latent assets, or what is not working but could be; and instrumental assets that can be used to commodify other assets.

Participatory development is local, community-based development that empowers the people in a place through the development process. Social capital is present in tight-knit Appalachian communities where the foremost channel for getting work done is the “deep-seated relationships of reciprocal obligations between kin and neighbors” (LaLone 2009). When practitioners fail to recognize the power of reciprocity in these communities, they neglect a foundational asset. In the research conducted on the Culture Hub, the researcher found partners cherishing the relationships formed from being a part of the organization. Culture Hub partners lifted each other up and progressed because of it. For example, a new Mountain Heritage Festival Stage was built for Cowan Community Center by Culture Hub partner HOMES, Inc. at no cost beyond materials, saving the Center upwards of \$5,000. Funding from Levitt AMP for the Whitesburg Music Series can partially be attributed to the votes yielded by Culture Hub partners. The Farmer’s Market generated more revenue and showcased the work of local artists, including art by partners. And bluegrass music festivals and jams were revived and well-attended. The synergy of the Culture Hub rests on reciprocity.

Also apparent from the research on participatory development in Appalachia is the importance of the relationship between the person leading the development effort and the community. In LaLone’s case study, the firm representatives did not take time to develop relationships and established a clear hierarchy between them and the community. Not working in a culturally appropriate way led the community to distrust the firm’s representatives; caused the

firm to conclude that the cultural heritage museum was not feasible and an RV park should be built instead, failing to recognize the community's assets; and created lasting tensions between people in the community. The case shows "one cannot work effectively *with* a community without understanding and anticipating how the community is likely to react and interact with the practitioner" (LaLone 2009). To work in a culturally appropriate way, one must take the time to build relationships, learn the history of the place, carry out rapport building activities, and give residents ample opportunities to participate and provide their input. This is one place creative placemaking can fail—*taking* a place and *making* a place without the community's participation.

Roadside complements Appalshop's business in "creating the conditions for creating jobs" (Fink and Pickering 2016) with a well-rounded history in inclusive Community Cultural Development. Roadside's CCD practice "utilizes the inherent intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material traditions and features of a community to encourage individual agency in support of community well-being" (Cocke 2015). Roadside's CCD practice, further realized in Performing Our Future's organizing methods, recognizes artists as "natural place-makers" for their ability to uncover, express, and repurpose the assets in a place (Nowak 2007), but they position artists differently than most creative placemaking or arts-based development. Many creative placemaking strategies are often led by large anchor institutions and distant foundations. They include artists that are sometimes local, sometimes not, who work for a community at a distance because they possess the talent to do so.

Cocke uses an example where an artist with a formidable reputation wants to produce a work addressing social justice. The artist receives either foundation or government support for this "cutting edge" work and starts working with the community: "The problem, from the perspective of Roadside's theory of change, is that if the performer's conception is not iteratively

tested and reconceived by people in the community based on their individual and group knowledge, it will be launched some distance off the ground” (Cocke 2015). The artist works at a distance, and “they fail because those most involved, those with the most knowledge, are not the generative base for devising and enacting strategies to confront the perceived challenges.”

This is part of the reasoning behind Roadside’s strategy to making work and leading CCD residencies, also adopted in Performing Our Future’s organizing process. Roadside is always *invited* into the community, which is important in community-based development (Lewis 2009), and notices when to lead and when to follow. The company gathers as many stakeholders as possible to prohibit any person or entity from taking a passive role. This establishes collective governance. In addition, a consensual practice, the story circle, is implemented at the start of the organizing process. Company members “facilitate a process not only of consciousness raising concerning often latent assumptions, but also of active discernment and learning on how the community might wish to act on those once identified.” In giving everyone a chance to share without judgment, individual discoveries are made, which catalyze collective realizations where “the community voice begins to proclaim itself.” In finding voice and agency and identifying goals and objectives, people are inspired to imagine, reimagine, and consider what could be.

Organizing is also critical because a democratic, populist approach to development is not easy. From Phase One of Performing Our Future, they learned turning community-led art into community-led economic development requires organizing skills, including “forging public relationships, negotiating the self-interest of a broad range of partners, creating a network powerful enough to launch a successful grassroots development process, and building communities’ capacity to take over leadership of the network” (“Three Major Lessons Learned” 2018). Having artists as organizers can serve the process; they can express and uncover local

culture and turn it into community wealth. Organizing is a difficult task that relies heavily on the lead organizer. A lead organizer must possess the drive and spirit to go into the community and build relationships, and not just anyone is going to have the ability to gain people's trust. A lead organizer has to remove hierarchy and be one with the community. Therefore, they really need to live in the place, not just be a visitor. They have to share their hopes, desires, and values and encourage others to respond. Conducting one-to-one relational meetings with community leaders is a good place to start—once a community leader's trust is gained, others are more likely to get on board. Likewise, art can be used as a tool to inspire personal and community expression.

The Letcher County Culture Hub evolved out of the organizing process. Fink adopted a completely relational approach from the start. He held one-to-one relational meetings with community leaders to identify mutual self-interests and facilitated story circles, giving community members an opportunity to share without judgment. Fink showed support for the people he met with, which unbounded their imaginations, and they became comfortable enough to share their ideas. He moved to Letcher County and participated in events, performances, and gatherings as a community member, never letting hierarchy get in the way of progress.

Generally, hierarchy is removed as a barrier to gaining trust and garnering participation by having an organizer rather than a project manager—an organizer is coordinating assets, not directing people. Even more, in the Culture Hub, the entire organization is comprised of community partners. People in the Leadership SubHub are also partners, and they work with the lead organizer to provide oversight and set the overall direction of the organization. The researcher discovered this gave community members a personal development opportunity. Partners found confidence from feeling genuine support and began to see themselves as leaders.

Cotten also sees relationship building as one of the Culture Hub lead organizer's primary responsibilities. Community trust spurs from strong relationships, leaving people with a desire to participate in the effort. Cotten is implementing trainings and identifying the skills of Culture Hub partners so they can help each other. Lewis asserts that "personal transformation and community transformation should occur together. To develop new and better businesses, people need to develop new skills" (Lewis 2009). This equalizes the playing field and expands community power.

From the start, Appalshop's approach to development was in providing support on the basis that a lasting partnership would form, rather than giving people money for a project and the relationship ending there. This essentially birthed Hutchinson's idea of a culture hub, or "an organization that can identify latent assets (especially cultural assets) and catalyze their transformation into community wealth" ("Appalshop-EEGLP working lexicon" 2018), as well as the concept for the partnership fund. The growth in the number of Culture Hub partners, and therefore community projects, shows this approach is sustainable. In addition, the power of providing seed funding from a partnership fund is visible from the survival of the community centers in Letcher County, which were in dire straits but able to stay open because of support from the partnership fund. Same with Cumberland Mountain Arts and Crafts Council which revived itself with initial support from the partnership fund, and then was able to learn how to sustain itself.

However, any bottom-up development strategy can be threatened by the people who traditionally hold power. Government officials can pose barriers to policy change. These barriers can dampen spirits and cause the community to lose faith in the effort. Likewise, fear of scarcity can make people lose confidence and trust in one another. Those in leadership positions, such as

the lead organizer and Leadership SubHub, are responsible for maintaining synergy and actively seeking support. The Culture Hub draws from Appalshop's endowment and receives support from foundations and initiatives that invest in organizations making an impact through arts-based development. For example, the Culture Hub is part of PolicyLink's Arts, Culture, Equitable Development Initiative supported by the Kresge Foundation. This initiative is expanding the impact of six community organizations working towards equitable development and policy change through arts and culture (Langston and Chang 2019). Additionally, holding trainings for people to develop administrative skills and encouraging them to share expertise with one another allows partners to apply for grants for their own organizations, furthering community opportunity and power. This mitigates the fear of scarcity and maintains partners' faith in building a sustainable future.

Opportunity and power enable the Culture Hub to address the quintessential problems in Letcher County. The county government decided to stop funding community centers, a vital public space for gathering and cultural expression. The Culture Hub supported several of them, stopping their bank accounts from a downward spiral. Johnson wanted to build a brick oven to make fresh breads and pizzas using locally sourced ingredients, and the Culture Hub supported her. Johnson's Black Sheep Brick Oven Bakery and Catering now generates enough revenue to pay the bills at Hemphill Community Center and employs formerly-incarcerated individuals. ROLL wanted to encourage businesses to come to lower Letcher, so the Culture Hub gave Whitehead money to enhance her jams at the park which have brought attention to this often-forgotten part of the county. Meade wanted to start doing bluegrass concerts again after being shut down by coercive power 30 years ago. Appalshop supported him, and now the concerts are self-sustaining and are a fundraiser for Kings Creek Volunteer Fire Department. Not everyone in



the county had access to high-speed broadband, limiting job opportunities and progress, so Culture Hub partners got together to form a Broadband Board. The county's energy systems were not economically or environmentally viable, but Culture Hub partners found a solution in solar power.

Furthermore, *Performing Our Future* incorporates different development practices into one effective bottom-up development strategy seen in the Culture Hub. Local art and culture are used to foster relationships and form cross-sectorial partnerships like arts-based community development, creative community building, and creative placemaking intend to do. Likewise, the arts activities produced by partner organizations and Appalshop activate a civic spirit and bolster the economy. The organizing process enabled the Culture Hub to form by building a strong network of community partners around a shared vision. Finally, the Culture Hub transforms local assets into community wealth. It is entirely driven by community members, making it inherently sustainable.

The researcher posits a democratic organizing process can be beneficial to any community that has experienced economic and cultural exploitation. The Letcher County Culture Hub, located in a place where people are reluctant to trust those initiating a development effort, shows this relational approach works. Through organizing, the Culture Hub formed and is now a network of 20 community organizations working towards the same goal—a sustainable economic and cultural future for Letcher County.

In *Performing Our Future*'s commitment to having their work be accessible via a public platform, Fink created “How to Make (Something Like) A Culture Hub – In Five Steps...” (see Appendix B) so other places can organize a community network. From being a part of a national

coalition's strategy, democratic populist development and the organizing process can mature through its implementation in communities all over the nation.

### Future Research

This paper attempts to contribute to the research on development practices, with the intention of finding the best way for arts and culture to be employed in a sustainable development strategy. The literature on the topic is extensive. An extension of this paper would further survey the field of development. Likewise, Performing Our Future only recently entered Phase Two where the coalition expanded to include projects in communities across the US. Continuing this research to include others in the Performing Our Future coalition would expand the thesis and therefore recommendations the researcher can offer.

Additionally, the fact that the researcher lives outside of Letcher County cannot go unmentioned. There are inherent trust issues in Appalachia because of economic and cultural exploitation. When information, resources, and wealth are extracted and misused to benefit those outside the community, distrust is warranted. If the researcher were to continue, she would spend more time in Letcher County getting to know people and supporting their projects. The researcher is thankful Letcher County Culture Hub partners trusted her enough to share their stories.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, no development strategy is going to lead to great change without confronting the systems that have abused the place. Only when the community gathers together to build collective power can these systems be confronted. Effective strategies are those where the community is turning local assets into shared community wealth, finding opportunity and power from the support of one another. What placemaking intends to do, activating a place from

the memories and histories of the locale, can be done when the community is truly driving the effort. Giving people opportunities to express themselves is a great way to begin any development effort. In Performing Our Future's organizing process, informed by Roadside Theatre's Community Cultural Development, story circles are an inclusive mode for encouraging expression. This garners personal reflection and collective realizations from which a shared vision for the future emerges. Likewise, one-to-one relational meetings unbound the imaginations of community leaders to share their ideas, and they begin to think even bigger and broader. The Letcher County Culture Hub's true power comes from the synergy between partners, made possible through the organizing process. Together, Culture Hub partners are finding collective agency and voice. With agency and voice, ideas, projects, and products "of, by, and for the people" emerge, and a future of community ownership, wealth, and power ensues.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Date:

Organization:

---

1. What is your experience of living in Letcher County, Kentucky? This can be something as simple as how long you have lived in the area, if you participate in any community groups, etc.

2. What does your organization do?

3. Did you have a connection to Appalshop before becoming a part of the Letcher County Culture Hub?

4. How did you become a Culture Hub partner?

5. How has the Culture Hub benefitted you personally?

6. How has the Culture Hub benefitted the organization you are a part of? If you have any specific examples, I would love to hear them!

7. In what ways has the Culture Hub benefitted your entire community?

8. What do you feel your role is within the Culture Hub? What is your duty as a participant?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## APPENDIX B

### HOW TO MAKE A CULTURE HUB

# HOW TO MAKE (SOMETHING LIKE) A CULTURE HUB — IN FIVE STEPS...



#### 1. Identify and assemble the primary actors, and do a first power map.

- You'll need (1) an ANCHOR INSTITUTION, (2) a PLANNING TEAM, and (3) a LEAD ORGANIZER. Start with any one of these—it might be you!—and identify and assemble the other two. Get together and start getting to know each other.
- Do the first draft of a POWER MAP: identify the (1) *institutions*, (2) *individuals*, and (3) *initiatives* that you could draw on for support, and how they're connected to each other.

#### 2. Identify where folks are gathering, and build relationships with their leaders.

You're looking for COMMUNITY CENTERS OF POWER:

- organizations *owned and operated by the people* in a given community, where all people in that community can gather, imagine, and create together—as co-creators of community power, not consumers of administered services.
- Depending on the community, they might include community centers, volunteer fire departments, churches, cultural organizations, grassroots action groups, and locally-owned businesses. They usually do NOT include governments, health and welfare providers, and educational institutions, at least not at first.

And you're looking to build relationships with their LEADERS:

- people (1) with a *following*, who others in the community look to for leadership, and who (2) are working to *develop those followers into leaders themselves*.
- NOT necessarily people with official titles, bureaucratic posts, advanced degrees, etc.

An important tool for building these relationships is the ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONAL MEETING: a face-to-face meeting to ask *questions* and *share stories* and *identify mutual SELF-INTEREST* (cultural values, personal drives, material needs, spiritual hopes).

#### 3. Start getting the leaders together to share stories, share other cultural experiences, identify shared self-interest, and start planning projects based in that shared self-interest.

Once you've got a solid, small group of potential institutional partners and done one-to-ones with their leaders, start finding—or making—opportunities for leaders to get together.

During these first meetings, make time for STORY CIRCLES: a structured process for sharing personal stories in a way that builds toward an understanding of the group's shared self-interest. (In the Roadside Theater tradition, these story circles often lead to community plays!)

Out of these first experiences together, ideas will emerge for projects—both *collective projects*, done by multiple partners together, and *individual projects*, done by single partners with support from the group. These projects can include planning an event, starting a business, or anything else that (1) allows for the experience of *collective agency*, and (2) works toward building *community wealth*, directly or indirectly. Make sure to keep CULTURAL WORK (music, craft, etc.) in the mix of projects: it'll keep the work grounded, reflective, and inclusive.

**4. Start pursuing these projects, keep meeting regularly, and build a partnership fund.**

Get to work! And keep meeting—as a whole group, in smaller working groups, and one-to-one relational meetings. Focus on building and strengthening relationships (always invite newcomers), imagining and planning together, holding each other accountable, and developing an experience of abundance—recognizing what we have and can do together.

To enhance this experience of abundance, start building a PARTNERSHIP FUND as soon as possible, to offer seed money to partners pursuing projects in the group's shared self-interest. This will be important to drawing in new partners and incentivizing ongoing participation.

**5. Keep growing...**

...in the number and diversity of

- *partners*—with the goal of representing everyone in the community...including people and institutions who may feel uncomfortable;
- *projects*—based on the passions, interests, and needs partners express,
- *leaders and leadership opportunities*—to build a democratic culture; and ultimately
- *power*—i.e., organized people + organized money + organized ideas.

## **...AND FIVE “BEST PRINCIPLES”**

**1. We own what we make.**

This is the basic shared value of all culture hub partners: a commitment to collective and inclusive voice, agency, and ownership. It's non-partisan, democratic *populism*.

**2. Work from the grassroots up.**

A culture hub is a collection of *community centers of power*, owned and operated by the people in a given community. Non-grassroots organizations (often governments, service providers, etc.) can be valuable collaborators on projects, but they do not form the base.

**3. Start from stories.**

Sharing stories—in story circles, cultural work, and meetings—is your backbone. Story sharing allows all members of a community to interact in safety and on even footing.

**4. Build collective power out of shared self-interest.**

Power = the ability to act = *organized people + organized ideas + organized money*. Build power *with* (not over) partners, out of the shared *self-interest* (cultural values, personal drives, material needs, spiritual hopes) you discover through your work together.

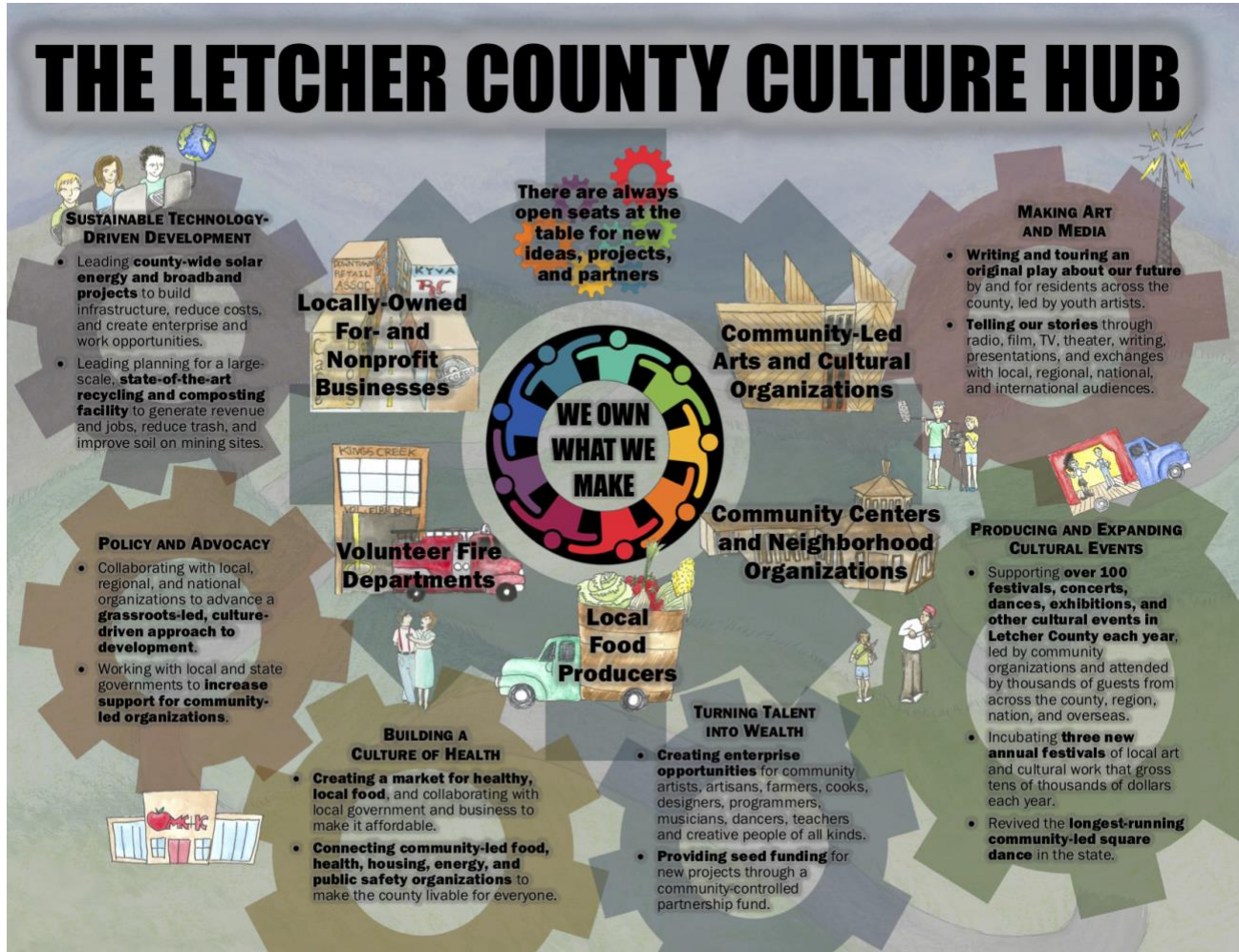
**5. Embrace productive tension.**

A culture hub is a change agent toward a future where everyone belongs. As change happens, there will be tension—among partners with differing values and visions, and with others interested in maintaining current inequalities and barriers. Just remember: when you're pulling something along and you feel tension in the rope, that's when you know it's ready to move!



## APPENDIX C

### WE OWN WHAT WE MAKE



## REFERENCES

- Appalachian Regional Commission. 2016. "Socioeconomic Data County." Arc.gov  
[https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio\\_report.asp](https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp).
- Appalachian Regional Commission. 2019. "Appalachian Region Counties Map."  
<https://www.arc.gov/images/appregion/AppalachianRegionCountiesMap.pdf>.
- Appalshop. 2019. "Our Story." Appalshop.org  
<https://www.appalshop.org/about-us/our-story>.
- ArtPlace. 2012. "The Higher Ground Project." *ArtPlace* (blog).  
<https://www.artplaceamerica.org/funded-projects/higher-ground-project/blog/higher-ground-project71912>.
- "Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: Summary Report." 2016. Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts.  
[https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF\\_Files/ARTS\\_AEPsummary\\_loRes.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf).
- Barret, Elizabeth. 2000. *Stranger with a Camera*. 16mm Film. Appalshop.
- Bedoya, Roberto. 2013. "Placemaking and the Politics of Belonging and Dis-Belonging." *GIA Reader* 24. <https://www.giarts.org/article/placemaking-and-politics-belonging-and-dis-belonging>.
- Bennett, Jamie. 2014. "Creative Placemaking in Community Planning and Development: An Introduction to ArtPlace America." *Community Development Investment Review* 10 (2): 74–81.
- Bennett, Walter. 1964  
<https://www.kentucky.com/news/special-reports/fifty-years-of-night/article44453805.html>
- Bevan, Robert. 2016. *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*. Second. London, United Kingdom: Reaktion Books, Limited.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aul/reader.action?docID=4615247>.
- Birnbaum, Josh. 2015. *Looking at Appalachia*.  
<https://lookingatappalachia.org/kentucky/a894yn12ryki10uk9esvaa6n7x474n>.
- Black Sheep Brick Oven Bakery and Catering. 2019. "About." Blacksheepbrickoven.org  
<https://blacksheepbrickoven.org>.
- Boissoneault, Lorraine. 2017. "The Coal Mining Massacre America Forgot." *Smithsonian*



- Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/forgotten-matewan-massacre-was-epicenter-20th-century-mine-wars-180963026/>.
- Borrupt, Tom. 2006. *The Creative Community Builder's Handbook: How to Transform Communities Using Local Assets, Art, and Culture*. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Fieldstone Alliance.
- Brauer, Carl M. 1982. "Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty." *Journal of American History* 69 (1): 98–119.
- Brown, Jeffrey. 2018. "As Coal Jobs Left, This Appalachian Arts and Culture Institution Gave Residents Reasons to Stay." *American Creators Series*. Whitesburg, Kentucky: PBS News Hour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/as-coal-jobs-left-this-appalachian-arts-and-culture-institution-gave-residents-reasons-to-stay>.
- Brunie, Aurélie. 2009. "Meaningful Distinctions within a Concept: Relational, Collective, and Generalized Social Capital." *Social Science Research* 38 (2): 251–65.
- Caudill, Mike. 2019. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Questionnaire.
- Charbonneau, Stephen Michael. 2009. "Branching Out: Young Appalachian Selves, Autoethnographic Aesthetics, and the Founding of Appalshop." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 37 (3): 137–45.
- Chu, Jane, and Jason Schupbach. 2014. "Our Town: Supporting the Arts in Communities Throughout the United States." *Community Development Innovation Review*, December.
- Cleveland, William. 2011. "Arts-Based Community Development: Mapping the Terrain." *Americans for the Arts*, A Working Guide to the Landscape of Arts for Change, . <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/arts-based-community-development-mapping-the-terrain>.
- Cocke, Dudley. 2015. "Community Cultural Development as a Site of Joy, Struggle, and Transformation." In *Arts and Community Change: Exploring Cultural Development Policies, Practices, and Dilemmas*. Routledge.
- Cortright, Joseph. 2005. "The Young and Restless in a Knowledge Economy." CEOs for Cities. <http://www.forwardcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Young-and-Restless-in-a-Knowledge-Economy.pdf>.
- Cotten, Annie Jane. 2019. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Phone.
- Creative Class Group. 2019. creativeclass.com.
- Daley, Nelda Knelson, and Sue Ella Kobak. 1990. "The Paradox of the 'Familiar Outsider.'" *Appalachian Journal* 17 (3): 248–60.

- David, Richie. 2018. "Black Sheep Deli of Amherst Gets a Kentucky Counterpart." *Hands Across the Hills* (blog). April 24, 2018. <https://www.handsacrossthehills.org/single-post/2018/04/24/Black-Sheep-Deli-of-Amherst-gets-a-Kentucky-counterpart>.
- Eisenberg, Emma. 2017a. "This Kentucky County Is Starting Its Own Broadband Network." *Vice*. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/vv5vaa/this-kentucky-county-is-starting-its-own-broadband-network](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/vv5vaa/this-kentucky-county-is-starting-its-own-broadband-network).
- . 2017b. "No Elitist Farmers Market Here—Free Healthy Food and Profits for Farmers." *Yes! Magazine*. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/a-farmers-market-for-those-who-really-need-it-and-profits-for-farmers-too-20170831>.
- Eller, Ronald D. 2008. *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/j.ctt2jctgr.1>.
- Ellis, Bryon, Greg Bone, and Roberta James. 2016. "Kentucky Coal Facts." 16th Edition. Kentucky: Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet and Kentucky Coal Association. [http://energy.ky.gov/Coal%20Facts%20Library/Kentucky%20Coal%20Facts%20%2016th%20Edition%20\(2016\).pdf](http://energy.ky.gov/Coal%20Facts%20Library/Kentucky%20Coal%20Facts%20%2016th%20Edition%20(2016).pdf).
- Estep, Bill. 2017. "Trump Plan Cuts Funds for Appalachian Agency That Helps Eastern Kentucky." *Lexington Herald Leader*. <http://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article138835108.html>.
- Fields, Nell. 2018. Thesis Interview with Jaime Pierce. In-person.
- Fink, Ben. 2017. "Building Democracy in 'Trump Country.'" *Moyers & Company*. <https://billmoyers.com/story/thursday-building-democracy-trump-country/>.
- . 2018. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. In-person.
- Fink, Ben, and Mimi Pickering. 2016. "Building Economy and Community Wiith Cultural Assets." In *How to Do Creative Placemaking*, 74–44. Washington, DC: NEA Office of Public Affairs.
- Florida, Richard. 2003. "Cities and the Creative Class." *City & Community- American Sociological Association* 2 (1). <https://creativeclass.com/rfcgdb/articles/4%20Cities%20and%20the%20Creative%20Class.pdf>.
- . 2012. *Why Creativity Is the New Economy - Richard Florida*. The RSA. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPX7gowr2vE&t=1274s>.
- . 2018. "The Rise of the Rural Creative Class." Wisconsin: Wisconsin Public Radio. [http://www.creativeclass.com/richard\\_florida/multimedia\\_showcase#WPR\\_rural](http://www.creativeclass.com/richard_florida/multimedia_showcase#WPR_rural).
- Forbes, Zelma. 2019. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Questionnaire.
- Gadwa Nicodemus, Anne. 2018. "Journeys in Creative Placemaking/Keeping/Taking." *Metris Arts Consulting* (blog).

———. 2019. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Phone.

Geisler, Charles C. 1983. *Who Owns Appalachia?: Landownership and Its Impact*. University Press of Kentucky. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/j.ctt130j5d6>.

Gibson, Alex, Gwen Johnson, Seth Long, and Bill Meade. 2019. "A Plea from the Mountains: Don't Snuff out Solar Energy's Economic Opportunities." *Lexington Herald Leader*. <https://www.kentucky.com/opinion/op-ed/article226233485.html>.

Gilpin, Lyndsey. 2018. "As Jobs Disappear in Coal County, a Giant Prison Is Pitched as the Solution." *HuffPost*. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/coal-appalachia-prison-kentucky\\_us\\_5b30b70be4b0321a01d3371e](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/coal-appalachia-prison-kentucky_us_5b30b70be4b0321a01d3371e).

Gottlieb, Jennifer. 2000. "The Creative Economy Initiative: The Role of the Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness." Boston, Massachusetts: The New England Council. [https://www.nefa.org/sites/default/files/documents/CEI\\_2000\\_report.pdf](https://www.nefa.org/sites/default/files/documents/CEI_2000_report.pdf).

Green, Gary Paul, and Anna Haines. 2012. *Asset Building and Community Development*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, California3: SAGE Publications.

Holtkamp, Christopher, and Russell C. Weaver. 2018. "Placing Social Capital: Place, Identity, and Economic Conditions in Appalachia." *Southeastern Geographer* 58 (1). <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxyau.wrlc.org/article/689985>.

Horn, Valerie. 2018. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Phone.

Howell, Susan. 2014. *Looking at Appalachia*. <https://lookingatappalachia.org/kentucky/ucz61ewmetxspgpb02y5141ebggfn>.

Jackson, Dr. Maria Rosario. 2018. "Creative Placemaking and Expansion of Opportunity." Troy, Michigan: The Kresge Foundation. [https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/cp\\_white\\_paper\\_2\\_for\\_posting.pdf](https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/cp_white_paper_2_for_posting.pdf).

Keefe, Susan E. 2009. *Participatory Development in Appalachia: Cultural Identity, Community, and Sustainability*. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press.

Kleiman, Neil Scott. 2002. "The Creative Engine." New York, New York: Center for an Urban Future.

Kretzmann, John P., and John L. McKnight. 1993. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Skokie, Illinois: ACTA Publications.

LaLone, Mary B. 2009. "Guidelines for a Partnership Approach to Appalachian Community and Heritage Preservation Work." In *Participatory Development in Appalachia: Cultural*

*Identity, Community, and Sustainability*. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press.

Langston, Abbie, and Lorrie Chang. 2019. "Kentucky Communities Unlock Their Cultural Wealth to Lead the Way Forward." *PolicyLink: Lifting Up What Works* (blog). [http://www.policylink.org/blog/letcher-county-culture-hub?fbclid=IwAR3N8dgYmnsxYBX0R\\_YY0cmzNCmp\\_9QdYDYCjM9p0z12q3OWm69GtKhlG0g](http://www.policylink.org/blog/letcher-county-culture-hub?fbclid=IwAR3N8dgYmnsxYBX0R_YY0cmzNCmp_9QdYDYCjM9p0z12q3OWm69GtKhlG0g).

Letcher County Culture Hub. 2019. [letcherculture.org](http://letcherculture.org)  
———. "Accomplishments." <https://www.letcherculture.org/accomplishments>.  
———. "Letcher County Profile." <https://www.letcherculture.org>.  
———. "Revive Our Lower Letcher." <https://www.letcherculture.org/roll>.  
———. "Tourism." <https://www.letcherculture.org/letcher-county>.

Lewis, Helen Matthews. 2009. "Rebuilding Communities: A Twelve-Step Recovery Program." In *Participatory Development in Appalachia: Cultural Identity, Community, and Sustainability*, 67–88. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press.

Light, Ivan H. 2004. "Social Capital for What?" In *Community-Based Organizations: The Intersection of Social Capital and Local Context in Contemporary Urban Society*, 19–33. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University.

Lippard, Lucy R. 1997. "All Over the Place." In *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society*, 4–21. New York, New York: The New York Press.  
<http://www.asu.edu/courses/aph294/total-readings/lippard%20--%20thelureofthelocal.pdf>.

Low, Setha. 1994. "Cultural Conservation of Place." In *Conserving Culture*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Lowrey, Annie. 2014. "What's the Matter with Eastern Kentucky?" *The New York Times Magazine*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/29/magazine/whats-the-matter-with-eastern-kentucky.html>.

Markusen, Ann, and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus. 2010. "Creative Placemaking." National Endowment for the Arts. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>.

Markusen, Ann, Gregory H. Wassall, Douglas DeNatale, and Randy Cohen. 2008. "Defining the Creative Economy: Industry and Occupational Approaches." *Economic Development Quarterly* 22 (1): 24–45.

May, Roger. *Looking at Appalachia*. 2019. "Overview." [Lookingatappalachia.org](http://lookingatappalachia.org)  
<https://lookingatappalachia.org/overview>.

- McGrath, Brian, and M.A. Brennan. 2011. "Tradition, Cultures and Communities: Exploring the Potentials of Music and the Arts for Community Development in Appalachia." *Community Development* 42 (3): 340–58.
- McPherson, Miller, Matthew E. Brashears, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2006. "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades." *American Sociological Review* 71 (3): 353–75.
- Meade, Bill. 2018. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. In-person.
- Meek, Vicki. 2018. "Creative Placetaking: It's A Thing!" *Creating Place* (blog).
- Nowak, Jeremy. 2007. "Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment." Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Reinvestment Fund.  
[https://www.reinvestment.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Creativity\\_and\\_Neighborhood\\_Development\\_Strategies\\_for\\_Community-Investment-Report\\_2008.pdf](https://www.reinvestment.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Creativity_and_Neighborhood_Development_Strategies_for_Community-Investment-Report_2008.pdf).
- Owens, Sam. 2015. *Looking at Appalachia*.  
<https://lookingatappalachia.org/west-virginia/yx11xxmg09wlqdfccicqcmofs04gl6>
- Oxford University Press. 2019. "Sustain." *En.oxforddictionaries.com*  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/sustain>.
- Parker, Kim, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Anna Brown, Richard Fry, D'Vera Cohn, and Ruth Igielnik. 2018. "What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.  
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/05/22/views-of-problems-facing-urban-suburban-and-rural-communities/>.
- Performing Our Future. *Community.performingourfuture.com*
- . 2018. "Appalshop-EEGLP working lexicon"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/appalshop-eeglp-working-lexicon>.
- . 2018. "Art and Culture in Development"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/art-and-culture-development-0>.
- . 2018. "Culture Hub Diagram"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/culture-hub-diagram-10-18>.
- . 2018. "How We Work"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/how-we-work>.
- . 2018. "LCCH\_Logo"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/lcchlogo>.
- . 2019. "How to Make a Culture Hub"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/how-make-culture-hub>.
- . 2019. "Making a Rural Culture Hub (Ben Fink talk at Rural Talks to Rural Conference)"  
<https://community.performingourfuture.com/article/making-rural-culture-hub-ben-fink-talk-rural-talks-rural-conference>.

- Performing Our Future: Digital Tool Kit. 2019. [Performingourfuture.com](http://performingourfuture.com)  
 ———. "The Story of Appalshop as Culture Hub"  
<https://www.performingourfuture.com/culture-hub.html>.
- Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rood, Sally. 2019. "Rural Prosperity Through the Arts and Creative Sector: A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States." National Governors Association.  
[https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA\\_RuralArtsReport.pdf](https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NGA_RuralArtsReport.pdf).
- Rupasingha, Anil. 2006. "The Production of Social Capital in US Counties." *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 35 (1): 83–101.
- Rushton, Michael. 2013. *Creative Communities: Art Works in Economic Development*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Sarnoff, Susan. 2008. "Central Appalachia- Still the Other America." *Journal of Poverty* 7 (1–2): 123–39.
- Schupbach, Jason, and Don Ball. 2016. *How to Do Creative Placemaking*. Washington, DC: NEA Office of Public Affairs.
- Slavin, Peter. 2017. "After Coal, a Small Kentucky Town Builds a Healthier, More Creative Economy." *Yes! Magazine*. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/after-coal-a-small-kentucky-town-builds-a-healthier-more-creative-economy-20170606>.
- Sturgill, Deborah, and Don Amburgey. 2019. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Questionnaire.
- Swick, Zachary D. 2014. "Adaptive Policy and Governance: Natural Resources, Ownership, and Community Development in Appalachia." *Appalachian Journal* 42 (1/2): 38–62.
- "The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community." 2008. National Arts Policy Roundtable. Americans for the Arts and Sundance Preserve.  
[https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/2008\\_NAPR\\_full\\_report.PDF](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/2008_NAPR_full_report.PDF).
- The Makings of a Master, Master Square Dance Calling, Charlie Whitaker (Master)*. 2011. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1h5cUR2n68&t=30s>.
- United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2019. "Sustainability." [Epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov/sustainability)  
<https://www.epa.gov/sustainability>.
- Wagner, Melinda Bollar. 2009. "Playing the Power Game: The Limits of Participatory Development." In *Participatory Development in Appalachia: Cultural Identity, Community, and Sustainability*, 141–56. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press.

Whitehead, Wanda. 2019. Thesis Interview by Jaime Pierce. Phone.

Wolff, Benjamin. 2019. "Why the Arts are the Great Unappreciated Engine of the U.S. Economy." *Forbes*. [https://www.forbes.com/sites/benjaminwolff/2019/03/19/why-the-arts-are-the-great-unappreciated-engine-of-the-u-s-economy/?utm\\_source=FBPAGE&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=2208750592&utm\\_campaign=sprinklrForbesMainFB#48a2dbf71709](https://www.forbes.com/sites/benjaminwolff/2019/03/19/why-the-arts-are-the-great-unappreciated-engine-of-the-u-s-economy/?utm_source=FBPAGE&utm_medium=social&utm_content=2208750592&utm_campaign=sprinklrForbesMainFB#48a2dbf71709).