

Post-Coal Futures in Central Appalachia: A Critique of the Appalachian Regional Commission
& Liberal Economic Development Models

Caleb William Gore

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Political Science

Andrew Scerri, Committee Chair

Bikrum Gill,

Cara Daggett,

Shannon Bell

April 28, 2022

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Appalachia, Eco-Marxism, Liberalism, Appalachian Regional Commission, Coal
Mining, Economic Development

Post-Coal Futures in Central Appalachia: A Critique of the Appalachian Regional Commission
& Liberal Economic Development Models

Caleb William Gore

ABSTRACT

This project critically evaluates liberal development plans created for Central Appalachia by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) through a historical materialist lens. It demonstrates that these plans and their explicitly liberal origins are not sufficient for the working classes in the region to achieve a sustainable 'post-coal' future. Central Appalachia is one of the most impoverished regions in the United States and its political economy was shaped largely by coal mining that was overseen by absentee proprietors. This mono-economic structure has bred unique political conditions in the region. The economics of coal have historically influenced most political decisions. As the coal industry has declined, the region has been subjected to multitudes of economic development plans from the ARC. However, Central Appalachia still exists as an impoverished peripheral zone within the United States' political economy. This thesis is motivated by the decline of coal and the economic and ecological hardships this has created for the region's working-class, and the urgent need to begin envisioning a post-coal future for the region which avoids the insufficiency of liberal economic development. The thesis is not purely an attack on the ARC as an organization, but is rather a critique of the methods they use to enact economic development and shows how these methods are not only inadequate for the Appalachian working class, but all working classes subjected to the liberal economic development model.

Post-Coal Futures in Central Appalachia: A Critique of the Appalachian Regional Commission
& Liberal Economic Development Models

Caleb William Gore

GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the efficacy of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) economic development plans. The ARC is the federal agency tasked with reducing poverty in the Appalachian region and was created in 1965. They have enacted over 28,000 development plans and spent \$4.5 billion since 1965, but Appalachia is still relatively impoverished in comparison to the rest of the United States. This impoverishment is largely due to the prevalence of the coal industry in the region and the fact that most political and economic decisions were influenced by the coal industry. However, the industry has been declining for several decades now, and this has created economic hardship for many in the region, as there are very few industries that have taken its place, leading to widespread unemployment. This paper focuses specifically on the Central Appalachian region of Southeastern Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, Northeastern Tennessee, and West Virginia. These states had the highest amount of people employed in the coal industry during its heyday, so they have borne the brunt of its decline. I offer a critique of the ARC's model of development and suggest solutions for mitigating the difficult situation in Central Appalachia and explore how the region can achieve a 'post-coal' future that does not rely on the current mechanisms of the ARC's model of development. This critique is informed by historical perspectives that highlight how Central Appalachia was structured as a peripheral zone in the larger US economy that served only to enrich the metropolitan areas of the US and world at great cost to the people of Central Appalachia and their natural environment. I perform my analysis through a historical overview of the economic structure of Central Appalachia as well as a content analysis of six ARC documents that outline their frameworks and methodologies for achieving economic development. While the paper is a critique of the ARC, the emphasis is more so on the particular method that the ARC uses to achieve economic development in the region.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Chapter 1: Theories of Society, Nature, and Capitalism.....4

Chapter 2: Political Economy of Central Appalachia.....16

Chapter 3: Content Analysis of ARC Plans.....40

Chapter 4: Towards Post-Coal Futures.....73

Chapter 5: Final Remarks.....87

Bibliography.....89

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the case of Central Appalachian economic development as it has been enacted by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The ARC has existed since 1965 and has invested \$4.5 billion into 28,000 development plans since then. Despite this, the working class of Central Appalachia has not seen its material conditions substantially improved. I focus specifically on the Central Appalachian region within broader Appalachia because it has historically been one of the most economically and environmentally exploited places in the United States. This can be attributed to the prevalence of the coal industry which was the main employer throughout much of the 20th century and entire communities were structured around the industry. However, as coal mining employment has steadily declined, there has been an urgent need to mitigate the effects from the downturn of the industry. The ARC is one of the main players in this development process, but despite their substantial number of investments, little to no change has occurred. From these facts, my thesis focuses on the following research question: *In a historical materialist framework, what are the weaknesses of liberal economic development plans from the Appalachian Regional Commission?* The historical materialist aspect of the thesis is needed because in order to understand the contemporary conditions of the region, there needs to be a simultaneous analysis of the history of political and economic structures that have perpetuated economic exploitation and ecological degradation in the region.

The first chapter contains the literature review, which is mainly composed of eco-Marxism, Marxist political economy, realist analyses of political and economic power, and

ideological analyses of liberalism. Additionally, I outline my normative methodology, although I discuss the empirical aspect of my project which relies on a content analysis of six separate ARC documents from the last seven years that demonstrate the ARC's approach to economic development, which I call the 'liberal economic development regime.'

The second chapter provides an overview of the history of the Appalachian political economy, specifically how 'primitive accumulation' occurred in the region, and how this impacted its political and economic development. This chapter is essentially the story of Appalachia and highlights how the conditions were created for the ARC to even be created in the first place. As I move through the chapter, I develop a critique of the ARC's 'workforce development' plans, which are a cornerstone of their methodology of development. I historically contextualize the ideology behind workforce development plans as it emerged during the era of the New Deal. This chapter also emphasizes the impact on the physical environment in the region through a discussion of 'mountaintop removal mining' (MTR) and how this affected not only the physical environment, but how it led to a decline in employment in the industry. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the general failures of liberalism, particularly in relation to what Stump (2021) describes as the 'liberal environmental law regime', and I draw connections between Stump's analysis and my own of the liberal economic development regime.

The third chapter constitutes the bulk of the thesis and is mainly composed of a content analysis of the six aforementioned ARC documents. The content analysis is performed through an engagement with Freeden's (1996) work which extrapolates on the 'decontested' terms of liberalism, and I apply his framework to empirical data I gathered through the content analysis software Dedoose. The goal of the content analysis is to demonstrate that the ARC's plans work from an explicitly liberal framework that adheres to free market ideology and continual

economic growth. It shows the ARC is fully adherent to the ideology of liberalism, both economically and politically and that this is the main roadblock for Central Appalachian economic development. I show this as well through a brief overview of the leadership structure of the ARC and note how the material interests of its leadership might believably be said to hinder the achievement of economic improvement for the region's working classes. I conclude the chapter with a critical analysis of liberalism and offer a Marxist-informed critique of the liberal methodology of development in the last section.

The final chapter is an attempt to parse out what a 'post-coal future' would look like in Central Appalachia. These solutions are not necessarily policy prescriptions, but rely on the normative frameworks provided by Daggett (2019), Stump (2021), Hickel (2019), and Smith (2008). Much of this discussion is based on 'degrowth' scholarship and so-called 'solidarity' economies as informed by ecosocialist and ecofeminist theories. I additionally highlight the necessity of the class struggle, as it is the dialectical process that moves history forward. In order for Appalachia to move beyond coal, I assert there should be a radical restructuring of the political economy and a decoupling of liberalism from economic development. Essentially, Central Appalachia cannot hope to achieve legitimate improvement of material conditions as long as development is spearheaded by an organization like the ARC because the organization continues to emphasize economic growth and the expansion of capitalist markets. This growth and expansion were historically the goals of the coal industry, which resulted in the exploitation of the Central Appalachian workers and their environment.

Chapter 1: Theories of Society, Nature, and Capitalism

i. Cartesian Binaries and Cheap Natures

The literature for this project is largely drawn from the schools of ecological Marxism, theories of liberal ideology, environmental justice studies, and critical sociological studies of Appalachia. The foundation of most of my analysis will lie in the school of Marxist ecology and political economy. Marxist ecologists argue that it is necessary to better understand the dialectical relationship between Nature and Society, as well as how capitalism¹ materially influences both. Jason Moore's (2015) work guides my analysis of the relationship. His idea of 'Cheap Nature', which posits that capital accumulation requires four specific 'cheap' inputs (labor power, food, energy, and raw materials) to make sure that cost of operation does not exceed profits.² I show that his model is directly applicable to the political economy of coal mining in Central Appalachia in the late 20th century and today amid its collapse. This also means that capitalism requires the creation and maintenance of a strict 'Cartesian binary' between Nature and Society.

Under capitalism, Nature becomes something to be quantified, mapped, and controlled to sustain commodity production, and Society is viewed as something totally external to it, with separate processes of production and reproduction. This has similarities to John Bellamy Foster's discussion of Marx's 'ecological rift' which highlights a similar binary between Nature and

¹Capitalism here is defined in the general Marxist sense as a system of economic production in which workers must sell their labor on the market for a wage, and the means of production are privately owned and not controlled by the workers.

²Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. 1st Edition. New York: Verso, 2015. 53.

Society under capitalist production.³ One of the main points that Moore makes is to conceive of capitalism as a so-called ‘world ecology.’⁴ For him, “It is not an economic system; it is not a social system; it is a way of organizing nature.”⁵ This is particularly visible in the case of Central Appalachian coal mining. Economic production was totally reorganized from small subsistence farming to extraction of coal and timber on an industrial scale. To demonstrate this, I discuss the historical development of land holdings in Central Appalachia, and how coal companies were able to obtain large swaths of land at remarkably cheap prices and simultaneously gain the mineral rights to millions of dollars’ worth of not just coal, but many valuable materials needed for production.⁶ For this analysis, I use the discussions on the historical development of landholdings provided by Stoll.

In liberal-capitalist understandings of Nature, the Cartesian binary exists to explain the relationship between Society and Nature in a way that allows for continual capital accumulation and unfettered production capacity. This is visible in both coal and timber production in Central Appalachia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to Stump (2021),

The full industrial maturation of the timber industry also resulted in an early, important challenge to Appalachian agrarianism. As industrial timbering occurred year-round, many Appalachians abandoned their agricultural modes of production in pursuit of corporate timber employment, because like the coal industry, company towns, logging camps and settlements were established as housing in the region.⁷

This quote highlights a noticeable change in the Appalachian citizens’ relationship to nature during the emergence of industrial production and how it took on the form of ‘enclosure’ by way

³Foster, John Bellamy. 2000. *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 37.

⁴Moore, Jason. 2015.. 8.

⁵Moore, Jason. 2015. 2.

⁶Stoll, Steven. *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*. 2017.

⁷Stump, Nicholas F. *Remaking Appalachia: Ecosocialism, Ecofeminism, and Law*. First edition. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2021. 27.

of company towns. According to Moore “The notion that social relations can be analyzed separately from ecological ones, is the ontological counterpin to the real and concrete separation of the direct producers from the means of production.”⁸ When conceptualized in this separate manner, the binary indicates that Society (external to Nature) acts *upon* Nature rather than through it. The capitalists practice this by ensuring that there is a stable ‘ecological surplus’ of the ‘Four Cheaps’ mentioned above to ensure cost of production does not exceed profit.⁹ Society and Nature are in fact not separable but are instead dialectically related through an intricate series of material relationships that Moore terms the *oikeios* and defines as “the relation through which humans act (and are acted upon) by the whole of nature---in our environment making.”¹⁰ Working from Moore’s empirical assumption I normatively demonstrate how treating Nature and Society as separate entities, and without consideration of their dialectical relationship, has contributed to the establishment of a capitalist mode of production that alienates the two from each other. In the Appalachian context, I use Moore’s analysis to extrapolate on the development of coal-centric capitalism and how this affected the Society/Nature relationship in the region.

In addition to the eco-Marxists, I engage with diverse selections of literature dealing with environmental justice, and critical sociological works pertaining to Appalachia specifically.

Three of the most important of these texts will be John Gaventa’s (1982) *Power and Powerlessness*, Nicholas Stump’s *Remaking Appalachia: Ecosocialism, Ecofeminism, and Law*, and Shannon Bell’s (2016) *Fighting King Coal*. While all these texts share certain similarities in their methodological approaches and topics, they each offer unique insights into different historical case studies of coal companies’ economic and political hegemony in Central

⁸Moore, Jason. 2015. 19.

⁹Moore, Jason. 2015. 91.

¹⁰Moore, Jason. 2015. 4.

Appalachia, and the cascade of material impacts on the environment and its people that followed. Gaventa's work will be of principal importance because he explores the more nuanced facets of power and control in coal towns across Southern and Central Appalachia. He also offers extensive historical examples from one specific 'company town' in Northeastern Tennessee that sheds light on how coal companies were able to establish complete dominance over every aspect of miners' and their families' lives. As Gaventa explains

Significantly, although the land was perhaps acquired unjustly, its unequal distribution is often now accepted as a natural, ineradicable fact of the social situation. Although the mountaineers suggest that their forefathers were ignorant of the future value of the land to the company, and that the land was stolen by the agents, they consider these matters not to be examples of exploitation but of their forefathers' ignorance or poor doings. The powerlessness reflected in the first key encounter of their society with industrial society has often been internalized as their fault.¹¹

Here, Gaventa clearly demonstrates how so-called 'political quiescence' was created in the case of Yellow Creek in Tennessee. While there are many more examples to be drawn from his work, this quote provides a demonstration of how the political economy of coal mining was created and its ideological underpinnings (re)produced. Additionally, Gaventa's discussion of the 'three dimensions of power'¹² is beneficial for understanding how agencies like the ARC make decisions and how its material interests are often at odds with those of the people of Appalachia. Gaventa's work also sheds light on the local dynamics of power within the coal towns as well and the specific role of the local elite in establishing coal's economic and political hegemony in the region.

Whereas Gaventa's case study is from the early 20th century, Bell's work deals with the more contemporary issues that coal companies have faced as the industry has declined and

¹¹Gaventa, John. *Power and Powerlessness. Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Pr, 1982. 55.

¹²Gaventa, John. 1982. 4.

grassroots resistance against mountaintop removal mining (MTR) has gained momentum. Bell provides extensive discussion on the gendered dynamics of local resistance to MTR mining and how the decline of coal employment has impacted the dynamics of the family in the region. Typically, mining and masculinity were one and the same in Central Appalachia and this has created an identity crisis for men who worked in the coal mines. Bell writes

With the increase in service-sector jobs and the decline in mining employment, many women are now their families' primary breadwinners---a difficult change for many families.... The resulting mismatch between economic reality and cultural beliefs about gender roles has meant that many men are no longer able to live up to the hegemonic image of masculinity that has long pervaded the Appalachian coal fields.¹³

These shifting dynamics in gender roles and their connections to the changes in the political economy in the region will be discussed further in chapter three of my thesis.

Lastly, Stump provides an extensive analysis of the failures of the 'liberal environmental law regime' in Central Appalachia and the relative failure of the state to regulate coal mining in a way that reduces impact on surrounding populations and the environment. This book helps guide my critique of the liberal developmentalist model, because Stump's foundational thesis is that the liberal environmental law regime failed "because environmental law exists as a mere internal supplement of the unsustainable liberal capitalist paradigm, the legal regime has failed utterly to halt ecological destruction in Appalachia and worldwide."¹⁴ Therefore, Stump says that the liberal regime was never intended to produce 'equity', but instead its only goal was 'efficiency', and the coal industry was no exception.¹⁵ This conception of efficiency can be connected to the

¹³Bell, Shannon. *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016. 79.

¹⁴Stump, Nicholas F. *Remaking Appalachia: Ecosocialism, Ecofeminism, and Law*. First edition. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2021. 3.

¹⁵Stump, Nicholas. 2021. 53.

Cartesian binary discussed by Moore as well as the metabolic rift introduced by Foster. To achieve this efficiency, individuals need to be alienated; alienated from their labor and alienated from the natural world around them, as demonstrated by the mapping and quantification of nature and its resources. This alienation ensures the continuance of capitalist modes of production, and growth and efficiency are achieved for these same modes of production, ensuring capital accumulation. As Marx says,

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion to the *devaluation of the world of men* [emphasis mine]. Labor produces not only commodities: it produces itself and the worker as a commodity---and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally.¹⁶

The question of value is key here. As coal miners, through their labor, created wealth and value for the company owners, simultaneously miners' labor was devalued, and their environment was attributed a monetary value which contributed to its destruction. Capitalism and its insistence on the input of Cheap Natures then creates a simultaneous economic valuation of the material world in conjunction with a material *devaluation* and destruction of this same world.

Regardless of how well-intentioned liberal reformism or regulation is, organizations like the ARC that employ this method of development will only serve to reinforce these inequitable systems of production. However, for those employed by the ARC, this is not necessarily a negative thing. The ARC board is composed of a presidentially appointed federal co-chair, an executive director, and thirteen Appalachian state governors and selected members of their cabinets. To demonstrate the commitment of the ARC to the liberal model of economic development, I conduct a content analysis in the third chapter of the thesis. This content analysis

¹⁶Marx, Karl, and Martin Milligan. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Great Books in Philosophy Series. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1988. 71.

focuses on six separate ARC documents that focus mainly on the plans that were created from the ARC's 2015 POWER Initiative. I chose the POWER Initiative because it encompasses 393 total plans and is still an ongoing project. It is perhaps the most comprehensive demonstration of the ARC's liberal method of economic development. The POWER plans are also a key component of the ARC's 'strategic investment goals' outlined in their five-year plans in 2016-2021 and 2021-2026 respectively. To quantify the ideology, I rely on core concepts of liberalism provided by Freeden (1996) and illustrate their usage in the ARC documents. I use Freeden's critiques of liberal ideology because he is a 'pessimistic' liberal and clearly acknowledges its contradictions that emerge between its ideological conceptualization and deployment in governance. I deploy his account of ideology as a conceptual apparatus for my normative claims about liberalism to compliment the critique provided by the Marxian framework.

By engaging with a normative eco-Marxist perspective along with the content analysis, I show that these plans are engineered to benefit a certain strata of society, and that it is not the working-class. An example is the ARC's 'REDI initiative', the stated goal of which is:

Through an integrated, comprehensive set of strategies, REDI, in collaboration with the Northern West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center, will identify, grow, and support property owners, private developers, and community development groups who will invest in and manage their properties to benefit their communities, bringing about the return of healthy real estate markets and local economies, as well as creating economic opportunities¹⁷

The other plans have similarities to this one, but this quote is an excellent example of the underlying logic within the ARC's method of development. The targeted beneficiaries of this plan are not the working-classes of the region, but instead the 'local elites'¹⁸ who already possess

¹⁷Appalachian Regional Commission. "POWER Award Summaries by State: As of October 2020." ARC, October 2020. <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/POWER-Award-Summaries-by-State-as-of-October-2020-UPDATED-1.13.2021.pdf>. 70.

¹⁸Gaventa, John. 1982. 11.

both the capital and power required to engage in property development. Stump's work offers a normative perspective on the 'liberal environmental law regime'¹⁹ and there are visible similarities of his explanation of the beneficiaries of these laws to the language of the REDI plan.

He writes on the embeddedness of environmental law within liberalism:

Environmental law as embedded within liberalism has constituted a critically flawed paradigm. Its failings emulate from multitudinous, intersecting sources, including a fragmented legislative scheme, legislative outs embedded by industry, the non-democratic nature of administrative agencies, and the related and pervasive phenomenon of industry capture of environmental agencies. The core structural flaw in environmental law is that it is simply designed to support---not disrupt---capitalism's paradigm of ceaseless accumulation through subordination and exploitation and continual growth.²⁰

Something of note in this excerpt is the 'non-democratic nature' of the administrative agencies because the ARC's decisions are being made from the top down with very little input from the general Appalachian population; especially the working-class. However, for the neoliberal-minded development body, this is not a negative thing, and they would argue that the plans are working as intended. Acknowledging the neoliberal perspective of the ARC is important, because it needs to be put in conversation with my Marxian critique of the plans and show that even by the ARC's own neoliberal metrics of growth and development, they are not reaching their stated goals. I provide a more in-depth analysis of this contradiction in the third chapter in my discussion section of the content analysis.

My analysis explains why current models of development and revitalization for Appalachia are still steeped in the liberal capitalist mode of governance. However, establishing what the historical conditions were that required the implementation of the plans (and even the creation of the ARC) is first necessary. The end project is not going to be a policy proposal to

¹⁹Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 93.

²⁰Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 112.

replace the initiatives that I am critiquing, but instead will be a critique of the explicitly *liberal and capitalist* models and methodologies put forth by the ARC. However, this abstracted critique by itself will not be sufficient for a historical materialist critique, so I briefly explore the history of the Appalachian political economy and previous models of economic development that were enacted in the region in the 20th century. By applying the normative perspectives discussed to the six documents in my content analysis, I demonstrate why the liberal economic development regime is insufficient for mitigating Central Appalachia's difficult political-economic situation.

ii. Methodology

I perform this research mainly through close readings of the various texts mentioned in the literature review, and then apply the normative conclusions from each of these and integrate them into my content analysis. This project is mainly qualitative, and it will rely heavily on the methodological approach used by Marxian historical materialists. The content analysis in the third chapter quantifies the language of my selected plans and illustrates my normative framework of critique. The aim of the content analysis is to contest the decontested and show how the ARC's adherence to this specific form of liberalism is one of the main blockages for the Appalachian region being able to improve its economic situation. My discussion section of the content analysis provides a more detailed summary of the documents and my findings. This specific methodology is necessary because it requires the analysis to consider all issues in relation to each other and their development over time as opposed to in isolation and temporally linear. The goal of the thesis is to use these critical methodologies to offer convincing arguments that highlight why liberal developmentalist models from the ARC are inadequate in addressing the economic hardships in Central Appalachian coal country.

This project would be insufficient in its methodology if it followed a linear train of thought that simply attributed all the ills of Appalachia and its people solely to coal mining and outside capitalists. This was not the case, however, as such widespread extraction of natural resources and exploitation of labor required significant cooperation from local elites and necessitated political and social structures to be created that (re)produced ideological, political, and economic hegemony. Notable about these structures is their persistence even as the coal industry has steadily declined. Typical conceptions of Appalachian coal mining interpret it as an outside project driven by venture capitalists and absentee landholders coming in and dominating all Appalachians, regardless of class. Although this is true to an extent, the class component is one of the most important features of this project because such widespread economic and ecological domination required a highly localized reproduction of the hegemonic ideology among the elites, which was then disseminated to and adopted by the miners and their families.

My understanding of class lies mainly within a Marxian conception (i.e. owners of the means of production and those who do not own the means of production), however for the purposes of this project, it will be more beneficial to use a quantitative measure of income. The federal government classifies a household of four that makes \$26,500 or less as impoverished, and I use this same metric to guide my understanding of class in Central Appalachia, wherein families making \$26,500 or less are constituted as working class.²¹ This class analysis will be significant for the project because it will holistically address the political, economic, and ideological roadblocks to a post-coal future in Central Appalachia. It is also important to address

²¹“Poverty Guidelines.” ASPE. Accessed September 2, 2021.
<https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>.

class implications in ARC development plans because typically these plans are focused on fomenting the creation small-businesses and jobs in the hospitality and tourism industries in the region, which will most likely be designed to cater to middle to upper class travelers and require locals to take jobs in this service economy.

Appalachia has had a significant environmental justice movement emerge in response to the ecological effects of coal mining, however, it has not been able to completely stop the industry. My engagement with the EJ school will be limited though and will mainly be discussed in the context of grassroots organizing in opposition to MTR mining. This is because an EJ framework can potentially conflict with an eco-Marxist framework because many EJ groups typically become swept up in the same liberal-capitalist system they are resisting. This is especially true in the case of Central Appalachia, as local activists' original demands are often co-opted and watered down by the larger national EJ groups, and incremental change is only achieved. I use this perspective because Central Appalachia has a long history of grassroots activism, which began in the early years of the coal industry during widespread labor unrest due to the difficult economic conditions imposed on the miners and their families. In more recent years, this activism has taken shape through local resistance movements against the practice of MTR mining, but it still has not been enough to halt the destructive practice. Additionally, the EJ movement in the region was largely driven and supported by women in affected communities, and it exemplifies the shifting gender dynamics in the region that have emerged in the decline of coal. Despite the efforts of these grassroots activists, widespread systemic change has not been achieved, and MTR mining has persisted. To explain this outcome, I show how these movements inevitably get co-opted by the same liberal-capitalist paradigm that they are trying to resist. This

perspective will demonstrate how trying to work *within* the same system that created activists' grievances will only offer incremental reform.

iii. Research Question

In an eco-Marxist lens, what are the weaknesses of liberal economic development plans from the Appalachian Regional Commission?

I arrived at this question after I began my preliminary research into development plans in Central Appalachia in addition to readings of Marxist political ecology. Appalachia has been impoverished for decades now, so much so that this led to the creation of its own regional federal development agency. What are the factors that contribute to Central Appalachia still constituting one of the poorest and environmentally degraded regions of the United States despite thousands economic development initiatives since the ARC's creation in 1965? Through my normative framework, I conclude that one of the main roadblocks to achieving development is the explicitly liberal and growth-oriented nature of the ARC and liberal economic development more generally. My position to answer this question is normative and interpretive, therefore the evidence I use comes from the ARC documents on the POWER initiative and five-year development plans and critiquing them from the normative frameworks discussed in the literature review along with the content analysis.

Chapter 2: Political Economy of Central Appalachia

i. On Society, Nature, and Capitalism

Before exploring the particularities of the ecological issues that resulted from coal mining in Appalachia, it is first necessary to show how capitalism requires a particular conceptualization of Nature and how this alters its relationship with Society. I understand this relationship through an eco-Marxist lens, as used by Foster (1999, 2000) and Moore. Marx himself devoted considerable space to discussion of the ecological impacts of capitalism and what this meant for Society's overall relationship to the natural environment. Key to this understanding is Marx's idea of the 'metabolic rift' as discussed in volume III of *Capital*:

Large landed property reduces the agricultural population to an ever decreasing minimum and confronts it with an ever growing industrial population crammed together in large towns; in this way it produces conditions that provoke an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of the social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself. The result of this is a squandering of the vitality of the soil, which is carried by trade far beyond the bounds of a single country.²²

Much like the alienation of the worker from her means of production under capitalism, capitalist production simultaneously creates an alienation of Society from Nature, wherein Nature's life-giving capacities become appropriated for the production process. In terms of Marxian political economy, the use-values of Nature are necessary inputs to create exchange-value²³ on the market.

²²Foster, John Bellamy. "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 2 (1999): 366–405. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210315.379>. (Citing: Marx, Karl. *Capital, Vol. III*. 1981, pp. 949–50)

²³The terms use-value and exchange-value are two concepts from Marx's work that have generated extensive discussion from scholars. Therefore, it is necessary to provide my own understanding of the terms as I use them several times throughout. My understanding of the two terms comes directly from Marx's own definitions in *Capital Vol I*. Use-value simply refers to the utility of a particular object or thing, but this use-value is only realized in direct relation to

According to Foster, “Marx employed the concept of the metabolic rift to capture the material estrangement of human beings in capitalist society from the natural conditions of their existence.”²⁴ Nature is the means whereby the worker can reproduce herself, and in capitalism, this reproduction is threatened by the simple fact that finite natural resources are instead appropriated into the cycle of economic production and privatized. This contradiction is best illustrated through soil exhaustion, where food production no longer has the sole purpose of sustaining human life, but instead becomes a commodity used to reproduce the worker and creates a cycle of exhausting resources for the purpose of sustaining the capitalist production process. On a larger scale, this rift presents itself in the antagonism between town and country and on the global scale in the rift between colonizing countries and their colonies where “whole colonies saw their land, resources, and soil robbed to support the industrialization of the colonizing countries.”²⁵ So whereas the worker becomes separated from her means of production, capitalism also separates the whole of Society from its means of *reproduction*, or Nature. Moore maintains that this separation between the two is a relatively modern phenomenon and “is the ontological counterpin to the real and concrete separation of the direct producers from the means of production.”²⁶ The externalization of Nature from Society conceals the dialectical relationship between the two, wherein Society shapes Nature and *vice versa*.

the commodity it is realized in, it is not an abstract concept, but a tangible thing that is materially realized through the commodity. Exchange-value is the value a commodity has in relation to other commodities (i.e. 20 yards of linen=1 coat, or rather, 20 yards of linen is *worth* one coat). (Marx, Karl. 1990. 27, 34)

²⁴Foster, John Bellamy. 1999. 383.

²⁵Foster, John Bellay. 1999. 384.

²⁶Moore, Jason. 2015. 19.

Capitalism requires an ever-expanding ‘zone of appropriation’²⁷ where natural resources and unpaid labor can be appropriated into larger production systems. Perhaps the best example of a zone of appropriation are colonies, where the Four Cheaps of food, labor power, energy, and raw materials are taken from the colonized in order to drive capitalist production in the colonizing country. This idea of Cheap Natures has similarities to Polanyi’s discussion of ‘fictitious commodities’ which are land, labor, and money.²⁸ These ‘commodities’ are not necessarily for sale on the market, but are required as inputs for the market to function:

nevertheless, it is with the help of this fiction that the actual markets for labor, land, and money are organized; these are being actually bought and sold on the market; their demand and supply are real magnitudes; and any measures or policies that would inhibit the formation of such markets would *ipso facto* endanger the self-regulation of the system. The commodity fiction, therefore supplies a vital organizing principle in regard to the whole of society affecting almost all its institutions in the most varied way, namely, the principle according to which no arrangement or behavior should be allowed to exist that might prevent the actual functioning of the market mechanism on the lines of commodity fiction.²⁹

These fictitious commodities, like Cheap Nature, must remain in the market for the entire production process to continue to be self-regulating. Any attempt at disrupting this ends up challenging the market mechanisms of capital and the rule of private property, i.e., attempts at redistributive policies and breaking up the massively unequal landholdings in Central Appalachia would disrupt the capitalist market. However, capitalism runs up against natural limits since land is clearly a finite resource. Therefore, it must continually seek out new zones of appropriation to ensure that the self-regulating capitalist market can remain as such.

²⁷Moore is using appropriation differently than the typical Marxist conception. He says “Appropriation, in what follows, names those extra-economic processes that identify, secure, and channel unpaid work outside the commodity system into the circuit of capital. Scientific, cartographic, and botanical revolutions, broadly conceived, are good examples...Movements of appropriation, in this sense, are distinct from movements of the exploitation of wage labor, whose tendential generalization is premised on the generalization of appropriate practices.” (17.)

²⁸ Polanyi, Karl. 2001. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. 75.

²⁹Polanyi, Karl. 2001. 76.

This highlights one of the main contradictions of capitalist production. The earth only has a finite number of natural resources, so as capitalism stalks the earth searching for new inputs into the production process, it inevitably faces limits. As Moore asserts, “The capitalist project requires a never-ending supply of ‘Cheap Natures’, meaning “ a rising stream of low-cost food, labor-power, energy, and raw materials to the factory gates. The law of value in capitalism is a law of Cheap Nature.”³⁰ ‘Cheap’ in this sense means that natural inputs of the production process can be used productively and inexpensively without interfering in the ability of the capitalist to accumulate profit. This requires a continual revolution in the production process, mainly through technological and scientific innovation. So as the laborer herself is exploited, Nature’s ‘labor’ is exploited to the point of exhaustion, which leads to a crisis of production.

Similarities can be drawn to this appropriation of Nature and Marx’s process of so-called ‘primitive accumulation’³¹ as both Nature and the laborer are drawn into capitalist production. This does not mean that the exploitation of the laborer and land are the same though, but instead indicates the distinction between ‘socially necessary labor time’ and ‘socially necessary unpaid labor.’³² Socially necessary labor time refers to the human labor that is employed for a wage to produce commodities, and socially necessary unpaid labor refers mainly to Cheap Natures that sustain socially necessary labor (i.e. unpaid reproductive household labor and food and raw materials needed for the production of commodities constitute socially necessary unpaid labor).

³⁰Moore, Jason. 2015. 53.

³¹Primitive accumulation refers specifically to Marx’s discussion of the enclosures in England in the 15th century in *Capital Volume I*, where land was taken from the rural peasant classes and they were forced to migrate into the newly emerging factory towns and cities to become wage laborers. Marx asserts this process as the needed condition for industrial capitalism to expand as it created the conditions for private property to become the dominant organizational structure of capitalist society. (Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital, Vol. I*. Ch. 26-29.)

³²Moore, Jason. 2015. Page 69.

This relationship between these two forms of socially necessary labor time can be understood as a ‘double dialectic’:

The first [dialectic] is premised on exploitation: abstract social labor/capital and wage labor. The second is premised on appropriation: abstract social nature/capital and unpaid work/energy. This allowed for the historical combination of accumulation strategies—capitalization and appropriation. Through capitalization, labor productivity is advanced through the rising value composition of production; through appropriation, labor productivity is advanced by seizing upon Cheap Natures, thereby reducing the value composition of production.³³

Through this double dialectic, capitalism is able to sustain itself and continue to accumulate profit, while keeping production costs low enough to be able to make this profit.

However, it is important to understand how appropriation and exploitation take place. To create a zone of appropriation, the land first needs to be mapped and quantified (i.e. what quantity of minerals are underground in X location and what is their potential value). Moore asserts that this quantifying mapping resulted in a ‘mathematized and mechanical world-praxis’ wherein value comes to be applied to Nature’s life-making capacities.³⁴ These processes of mapping create ‘abstract social natures’, which gives quantifiable meaning to the natural world through practices of mapping and calculating the world within the realm of value.³⁵ What this means is that abstract social natures *are produced* through imperial and state power, leading to a creation of simplified natures that are conceptualized through the law of value, where Nature itself is designated a particular use-value needed in the production of commodities.³⁶ Put more simply, Nature is simplified in the sense that it is ascribed a value only in relation to its ability to create *exchange-value* for the capitalist. So, like the worker, Nature is then evaluated through metrics of productivity and wealth creation.

³³Moore, Jason. 2015. 214.

³⁴Moore, Jason 2015. 214.

³⁵Moore, Jason 2015. 215.

³⁶Moore, Jason. 2015. 216.

ii. The History of Primitive Accumulation in Appalachia

For individuals unfamiliar with the history of Central Appalachia, it can be difficult to understand how coal maintained economic and political dominance for so many years despite the clear negative ecological impacts. Contemporary coal mining normally does not take place underground as it did in the heyday of the industry, but it has instead pivoted to surface mining, specifically ‘mountaintop removal mining’ (MTR):

Mountaintop removal is any method of surface coal mining that destroys a mountaintop or ridgeline, whether or not the mined area will be returned to what is legally described as the “approximate original contour.” Methods of mountaintop removal coal mining include, but are not limited to: cross-ridge mining, box-cut method mining, steep slope mining, area mining or mountaintop mining.³⁷

MTR mining has resulted in widespread devastation across the region, and environmental activist groups estimate that a total of 501 mountains have been removed throughout the Central Appalachian states of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.³⁸ The practice of MTR, in addition to drastically altering the physical environment, has had negative health consequences for those who live in proximity to the mining sites, including birth defects, cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.³⁹

While the ecological consequences are clear, the widespread adoption of the practice has contributed to the overall decline in employment levels in the industry as well, often putting environmental activists trying to stop the harmful practice at odds with miners who rely on its continuation:

³⁷“Mountaintop Removal 101.” 2015. Appalachian Voices. <https://appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/mtr101/>.

³⁸“Mountaintop Removal 101.” 2015. Appalachian Voices.

³⁹“Mountaintop Removal 101.” Appalachian Voices. 2015.

With a decreasing membership, and less political clout, the [miners'] union has become less of an oppositional voice to the industry, with some important exceptions, especially around worker safety. But the union is structurally and politically dependent on the existence of the industry. It has sided with the industry against environmental activists, although some union miners oppose MTR and advocate a renewed focus on underground mining.⁴⁰

As a result of increasing mechanization of mining, employment in the industry has decreased drastically: "...coal employment in West Virginia, the foremost coal-producing state in Appalachia, has declined steadily since the 1940s. In 1948, there were 131,700 coal miners in the state; in 2010 there were only 22,599."⁴¹ This has resulted in a surplus of labor in the region and has simultaneously led to an increase of individuals employed in service-sector jobs, which are often lower paying and have a gendered dynamic, resulting in an increasing trend of women becoming the primary family breadwinners.⁴²

MTR mining represents one of the most blatant examples of the capitalist-induced separation of Society from Nature. More specifically, the division between Society and Nature in Appalachia foregrounds the conflict between industry supporters and environmental justice advocates:

Industry supporters focus instead on their place in the economy as a form of abstract locality, claiming as principle the identity of national citizens and referencing Appalachian cultural specificity primarily as a commodity in the national market. This view conceptualizes landscape essentially as property, a form of abstract space where the commodity can be cognitively separated from the human community and natural environment.⁴³

⁴⁰Scott, Rebecca. 2010. *Removing Mountains: Extracting Nature and Identity in The Appalachian Coalfields*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 7.

⁴¹Bell, Shannon. 2016. *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 89.

⁴²Bell, Shannon. 2016. 89.

⁴³Scott, Rebecca. 2010. 7-8.

Since this view has been perpetually reinforced by the dominant ideological forces of the coal industry, it simultaneously resulted in a separation between Appalachians and their sense of place, and the environmental justice movement in the region has been trying to reclaim this through activism against MTR mining. It is important to note though, that coal mining structured Appalachia as a commodity frontier⁴⁴, and needs workers to process the commodities cheaply (i.e. ensuring access to Cheap Natures for the companies) and this has resulted in labor becoming enveloped in this same frontier.

However, this creation of Appalachia as a commodity frontier did not occur overnight but was instead a long historical process of appropriation and exploitation that began long before the coal companies formally established themselves as the dominant force in the region. By the time the land was violently wrested from the indigenous peoples who initially inhabited the region, speculators and local elites had marked the region as a place where extractive economies could flourish by ‘translating the earth into a commercial language.’⁴⁵ This translation was the result of land speculators and industrialists mapping the region based on where potential commodities could be extracted, beginning most extensively with timber, and the groundwork for industrial dominance was laid through clear-cutting forests and cheaply purchasing land from subsistence farmers,

⁴⁴I understand commodity frontiers through the definition provided by Marley (2016): “Commodity frontiers are regions where minimal capital investment can consolidate and accumulate great quantities of land, labor and resources. They are formed as a way of mass-producing one commodity in order to supply cheap inputs for capital, including cheap food for lowering the reproduction costs of labor. For example, the agricultural frontier of the American Great Plains, discussed further below, supplied cheap food to an expanding global proletarian class that was filling the mills, mines and factories.” Marley, Benjamin J. 2016. “The Coal Crisis in Appalachia: Agrarian Transformation, Commodity Frontiers and the Geographies of Capital: The Coal Crisis in Appalachia.” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16 (2): 225–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12104>. 228.

⁴⁵Stoll, Steven. 2017. *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*. First edition. New York: Hill and Wang, A division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 129.

But mining was not the only or even the primary form of extraction. Felling the forest affected a much larger area. A great many counties had no coal. All of them had trees.... For as profoundly transformative as coal mining proved to be, it would have left most households in place. Clear-cutting the woods changed everything.⁴⁶

Perhaps most remarkable about this entire process is that it was legally sanctioned. Stoll discusses the 1891 decision by the Supreme Court of the United States to uphold ‘Dillon’s Rule’, which played a role in ‘streamlining access to natural resources.’⁴⁷ Essentially, the rule allowed state legislatures, instead of local governments, to sanction corporate activities without gaining the consent of anyone who would be impacted as a result.⁴⁸ This structure, compounded with the accumulation of landholdings to a small number of individuals, created the foundations for an extractive economy that largely ignored the potential negative impacts on local citizens and their land. Through these methods of legalized enclosure and economic mapping, the groundwork for the coal companies’ domination was laid and Appalachia was destined to become a commodity frontier for the foreseeable future.

Marx’s description of primitive accumulation in the English countryside and Stoll’s description of the expropriation of Appalachian peasant farmers from their land hold striking similarities. Prior to the dominance of the coal and timber industries, there was a significant amount of families in the region who relied on small subsistence farming to sustain themselves and as of 1870, West Virginia only had 285 farms that were larger than 500 acres which accounted for only 1% of total farms in the state.⁴⁹ However, as industrialization of the region continued, the subsistence farmers could no longer sustain themselves through selling their surplus farm products and instead were forced to enter into the labor market, not as

⁴⁶Stoll, Steven 2017. 131.

⁴⁷Stoll, Steven. 2017. 137.

⁴⁸Ibid. 137.

⁴⁹Ibid. 148.

entrepreneurs, but as workers.⁵⁰ This transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist social relations relied on four interlinked conditions: population pressure, loss of the homeplace, ecological destruction, and the dwindling value of mountain commodities.⁵¹

As more speculators and industrialists came into the region, not only did social relations of production change, but material relations to the land were altered as well. Private property enclosures emerged as the norm of the region and were strengthened by legally sanctioned appropriation and extraction of Cheap Natures, resulting in the loss of pre-capitalist modes of existence and driving individuals out of the region to seek industrial employment in other cities, or into waged work in local coal and timber jobs. Thus, the stage was set for coal to dominate the political and economic structures of the region for the decades to come which resulted in the economic immiseration of the working classes as the wealth created by the miners' labor went to the companies and local elites. By 1965 when the ARC was created, much of the Central Appalachian region was destitute and in desperate need of economic revitalization. However, as I show, the ARC could not accomplish this task through their method of development that was deeply intertwined with the same structures that necessitated their initial creation.

iii. Appalachian Political Economy and the Dominance of Coal

There is a misconception about the political and economic structure of Appalachia that asserts that widespread economic and political exploitation was something enacted on the region solely from outside companies, when in fact there was significant cooperation between 'local elites' and these outside capitalists. Coal mining was only able to become the hegemonic

⁵⁰Stoll, Steven. 2017. 148.

⁵¹Ibid. 148.

industry in the region because of local elites' complicity with the desires of the non-native industrialists to exploit the region's natural resources and laboring population: "The ascension of coal to its dominant position within the fossil fuel hegemony was achieved through the profound subordination of the Appalachian citizenry and environment."⁵² Gaventa discusses this dynamic between workers and local/outside capitalist extensively and says that the relationship between the groups can be understood through the political quiescence of the working classes in Appalachia. This quiescence can be understood as a kind of self-internalized powerlessness. Gaventa, drawing from Freire, asserts that the development of a consciousness of the oppressed is constituted through a dialectic between man's objectification and action upon the world.⁵³ He continues,

In situations of highly unequal power relationships, which he [Freire] terms 'closed societies', the powerless are highly dependent. They are prevented from either self-determined action or reflection upon their actions. Denied this dialectic process and denied the democratic experience out of which the 'critical consciousness' grows, they develop a 'culture of silence.'⁵⁴

Historically, although the Appalachian working classes have been denied this dialectical process, there are times when a critical consciousness emerges, particularly during labor action by coal miners and recent grassroots environmental activism against MTR mining. However, there has been denial of a democratic process, and even when environmental justice advocates 'win', they have had to watch their desired goals for change get co-opted within the same system they were resisting.

⁵²Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 27.

⁵³Gaventa, John. 1982. 18.

⁵⁴Gaventa, John. 1982. 18.

Something important to note in Gaventa's discussion is how the dominant ideology becomes internalized by the oppressed themselves. In the case of coal mining, companies not only maintained both a political and economic hegemony, but an ideological one as well. The coal industry has been adept at changing their narrative and messaging to ensure continued support for extraction, particularly in the last 20 years as the industry has been declining and pressure from activists to divest from fossil fuels has challenged their hegemony. The ideological control of the coal companies shows similarities to that of so-called 'neoliberal ideology' and both reproduce their ideology as 'common sense'.⁵⁵ By positing its ideology as common sense, the companies: "limit[s] the possibilities of what can be said, frames political controversies as primarily economic in nature, and reproduces neoliberal ideology, like the idea of the free market as common sense."⁵⁶ The coal industry also does this in rhetorical moves against environmental activists, and this has often created substantial tensions between miners and the activists. One example of the industry adapting to changing views on mining is demonstrated in the organization 'Friends of Coal' (FOC), an astroturf group created by the West Virginia Coal Association in 2002.⁵⁷

The mission of the FOC has mainly been to reestablish the ideological and political hegemony of coal in the region as employment levels decreased and the ecological impacts became more visible to citizens in the region. Most notable about the FOC is their deployment of cultural appropriation as a method of appealing to West Virginians:

One way the coal industry maintains its power is by actively constructing ideology that furthers its interests. The changes in coal production in West Virginia illustrate how industry

⁵⁵Schneider, Jen, Peter K. Bsumek, Jennifer Peeples, and Steve Schwarze. 2016. *Under Pressure: Coal Industry Rhetoric and Neoliberalism*. 1st ed. 2016. Palgrave Studies in Media and Environmental Communication. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53315-9.10>.

⁵⁶Schneider, et., al. 2016. 10

⁵⁷Bell, Shannon. 2016. 94.

works to retain community loyalty when it no longer serves as a major source of employment...the industry's response to this ongoing threat has been to engage in cultural manipulation, attempting to construct a pro-coal ideology that will shape a community's identity.⁵⁸

The ideological construction is incredibly important because it works to conceal the precarious economic conditions of the industry by associating it with positive cultural indicators in the region, such as NASCAR drivers and college football coaches.⁵⁹ It has also relied on a form of indoctrination by way of implementing pro-coal education curricula in primary and secondary schools.⁶⁰ Schneider et., al. identify five separate rhetorical tactics used by the industry to counter challenges to their hegemony.⁶¹ The FOC is mainly representative of 'corporate ventriloquism' wherein companies 'throw' their voice through front groups like the FOC to

create the impression of broadly based and unified support for its interests, a corporation masks its own influence over the space and conditions for voice, articulates and enacts neoliberal citizenship, and undermines the value of dissenting, textured, and independent voices in public discussions about the industry and its interests.⁶²

Key to FOC's mission is discrediting of activists, or just generally dissenting voices in the region. They perpetuate an explicitly liberal rationality that poses all problems as economic ones and disregard the normative and political implications. The role of the FOC is to 'humanize' the coal industry and portray the companies themselves as part of the larger citizenry, which gives more credibility to their rhetoric and creates the false impression that their interests align with the working classes of the region: "Coal's version of corporate ventriloquism supplements

⁵⁸Bell, Shannon. 2016. 107

⁵⁹ Bell, Shannon. 2016.

⁶⁰Bell, Shannon. 2016. 106

⁶¹ The five rhetorical moves are: industrial apocalyptic, corporate ventriloquism, technological shell game, hypocrite's trap, and energy utopia. (Schneider, et., al. 2016. 3-4.)

⁶²Schneider, et., al. 2016. 54.

neoliberal rationality with appeals to family and nation in order to further erase distinctions between corporations and citizens.”⁶³

By dominating ideological discourse, the coal industry can conceal its true material economic interests and strives to ensure the continuance of extraction and works to discredit environmental activists who challenge their narrative. There are parallels in Schneider et al.’s, discussion of corporate neoliberal rhetoric and Freedman’s discussions of liberal rationality, as both are characterized by a common sense which sets the limits of what political concerns can be about. While this discussion has focused on the FOC and coal industry, there are parallels to be drawn between it and the ARC’s rhetoric. For the ARC, the ideological and political limits are already firmly established regarding how development can occur. The ARC does not raise questions about the overall political structure of the region, and instead asserts the hardships of Appalachia can be solved in the economic realm through *individual* action and improvement. This is directly observable in their ‘strategic investment goals’ of Economic Opportunities, Ready Workforce, Critical Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Assets, and Leadership and Community Capacity.⁶⁴ All of their solutions exist within the same framework of (neo)liberal rationality that views all problems as solvable within the economic realm as opposed to challenging the political and ideological hegemony that sets the horizons for how economic development can be achieved.

To fully grasp the economic situation of Appalachia at the height of the coal industry, it is necessary to analyze it in relation to the rest of America (and even the world’s) energy needs:

The economic demands of the metropolis destined these resources [coal and timber] in Central Appalachia to be developed at any time. The catalyst was the visionary Alexander

⁶³Schneider, et., al. 2016. 60.

⁶⁴Appalachian Regional Commission. “Investing in Appalachia’s Future: The Appalachian Regional Commission’s Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia’s Opportunities. 2016-2020.” ARC. November 2015. 13.

Arthur, described upon his death as the instrument which opened to man another of the waste places of the world.⁶⁵

Noticeable from this quote is ‘waste places of the world’. This terminology is applicable to most developing states in the Global South, and impoverished regions like Appalachia, and is intimately related to the logic of improvement in the colonial context. For the capitalist classes, if land and resources are not being fully integrated into the production process, and not under private ownership, then they are not being used *productively* and are simultaneously *wasted*. Central Appalachia has historically existed as a commodity frontier, and is viewed as a place of untapped natural resources with a surplus population of cheap labor that can be exploited and appropriated for capital accumulation.

The question, however, is what happens when all commodity frontiers have been exhausted and the zone of appropriation is unable to keep up with the zone of commodification? In the case of Central Appalachia, it was simply abandoned by the coal companies, leaving entire towns without employment seemingly overnight. As capitalism faces natural limits to accumulation and appropriation, it must adapt and find new commodity frontiers and zones of appropriation. Returning to Polanyi and Moore, these natural limits relate specifically to the inability to appropriate new zones of Cheap Nature and fictitious commodities. To provide an example of capitalism adapting to these limits, I explore the ‘ecotourism’ initiatives described by the ARC.

One of the five strategic investment goals of the ARC is capitalizing on ‘natural and cultural assets’ which typically appears in plans geared towards ecotourism initiatives or downtown revitalization plans. The strategic investment goal of natural and cultural assets, outlined in their 2016-2020 investment goals, has five ‘action objectives’: preserve and

⁶⁵Gaventa, John. 1982. 48.

strengthen existing natural assets in support of economic opportunities that generate local and regional benefits, preserve and strengthen existing cultural assets through strategic investments that advance local and regional economic opportunities, support strategic investments in natural and cultural heritage resources to advance local economic growth, and support preservation and stewardship of community character to advance local economic growth.⁶⁶ An example of these investment goals in action is the 2018 initiative “Appalachian Wildlife Center Wastewater Treatment Project’. This plan cost around \$1.3 million and will

install a wastewater treatment facility for the Appalachian Wildlife Center (the Center). The Center will be a major tourist attraction and a world-class education and research facility focused on wildlife conservation and reuse of reclaimed coal lands of Appalachia. Located on 19 miles of reclaimed mine land, the Center will feature the largest elk restoration and viewing effort in the United States and will boost tourism in a tristate area. When fully operational, the Center expects to host over 835,000 annual paying attendees.⁶⁷

Notable about this plan is that it is occurring on formerly mined land. It is directly demonstrative of capitalism’s (re)appropriative capacities. The land still exists as a fictitious commodity, it is just being reintegrated into the market in a new way to account for the loss of the mine.

However, the main point I want to contest in these plans is the insistence on continual economic growth. This growth-centric development is ardently supported by the local elites and is a core feature of the ARC’s development plans. This represents a continuation of the elite-dominated political and economic processes of the region:

Appalachian elites have for decades failed the regional citizenry and environment not just by continuing to fixate on coal and other fossil fuel related development, but have more broadly focused on market-based approaches to growth and development that are detrimental to the region. Appalachian policymakers have long diverted millions of dollars to the creation of

⁶⁶ARC. Investing in Appalachia’s Future: The Appalachian Regional Commission’s Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia’s Opportunities. 2016-2020. 2015. 32.

⁶⁷Appalachian Regional Commission. 2020. “POWER Award Summaries by State: As of October 2020.” ARC. <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/POWER-Award-Summaries-by-State-as-of-October-2020-UPDATED-1.13.2021.pdf>. 18.

jobs that were disappearing in the rest of the nation and such policies have encouraged short-term growth at the expense of more sustainable development.⁶⁸

This growth-centric development is directly observable in the ARC's various investments, and even in the strategic investment goals outlined in their five-year development plans, particularly in the first of these which is 'economic opportunities.'⁶⁹ These economic opportunities are supposed to arise from plans focused on workforce development, ecotourism, and entrepreneurship, which all have the alleged goal of creating new market opportunities for local residents. However, these are opportunities that are not necessarily accessible to the general public or rather the most economically exploited of the region. Especially for the ecotourism initiatives, these plans are supposed to bring outsiders into the region who will spend money to see Appalachia's 'natural and cultural assets' and patronize the newly created businesses.

iv. Failures of Liberalism: Parallels Between Environmental Law and Economic Development

Despite the attempted implementation of environmental laws and regulations in Appalachia to mitigate the ongoing impacts of extractive industry, the destructive practice of mountaintop removal mining continues to be the main method of mining coal. The desire to pass these laws and regulations was largely driven by grassroots environmental activists in the region who were witnessing destruction of their natural environment on an unprecedented scale. However, because they were unable to enact change outside the liberal-minded regulatory bodies, they failed to stop the practice of strip mining and mountaintop removal. According to Pulido et al., environmental justice movements have faced failures in recent years because of the

⁶⁸Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 145.

⁶⁹Appalachian Regional Commission. "Investing in Appalachia's Future: The Appalachian Regional Commission's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities. 2016-2020." ARC. November 2015. 13.

hegemony of liberal thinking in the US, and affected communities are unable to conceptualize solutions outside of the already-existing paradigm.⁷⁰ It is not appropriate to place the blame solely on the communities' activists, but it is important to highlight the ideological constraints their solutions exist within. This constraint occurs because of the liberal state's ability to co-opt and appropriate environmental justice concerns and force activists to rely on the pre-existing state regulatory mechanisms.

However, these mechanisms are wholly ineffective for truly mitigating negative impacts of industry because they lack standards, accountability, and legal authority.⁷¹ One example, provided by Stump, is the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977 which 'generally requires operators to restore mining sites to their approximate original contour (AOC)' after mining stops on a site.⁷² Despite this being passed at the federal level, 'Central Appalachian coal operators and coal-state congressional representatives sought an exemption from the AOC requirement for mountaintop removal mining.'⁷³ Proponents of MTR mining went so far as to assert that MTR actually created flat land that could be used for development, which according to them, was a commodity in short supply in the region.⁷⁴ As a result, SMCRA has had little to no capacity to enforce the AOC clause, and a report in the late 1990s in the *Charleston Gazette* found that 75% of active MTR sites in West Virginia were not operating in line with the federal standards of SMCRA and AOC.⁷⁵ With these issues then, it is not difficult to understand why environmental justice advocates face such difficulty (not only in Appalachia)

⁷⁰Pulido, Lauren, Ellen Kohl, and Nicole-Marie Cotton. 2016. "State Regulation and Environmental Justice: The Need for Strategy Reassessment." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27 (2): 12–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2016.1146782>. 2.

⁷¹Pulido, et., al. 2016. 5.

⁷²Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 115.

⁷³Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 115.

⁷⁴Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 115.

⁷⁵Ibid. 115.

in stopping ecologically destructive practices. When a state is structured in such a way that legal and political mechanisms of regulation have aligned themselves with capital, it becomes nearly impossible for the affected citizenry to enact meaningful change and mount a substantial challenge to the structures harming their communities.

Stump notes that this highlights the ‘critically flawed paradigm’ of the liberal environmental law regime. Much like the liberal economic development regime, the liberal environmental law regime cannot conceptualize solutions outside of the already-existing paradigm of liberal capitalism because environmental regulatory agencies are often captured by the very industries they are trying to regulate.⁷⁶ The coal industry is nothing, if not persistent in its desire to maintain regional economic hegemony,

environmental agencies were wholly susceptible to such capture, in the first place, due to their built-in structural flaws. Unlike lawmakers from the legislative branch who are, at least in theory, beholden to the voting populace, executive branch administrative officials are simply appointees and often careerist professionals.⁷⁷

There are immediate parallels in this quote between Stump’s description of environmental agency bodies and economic development bodies. Since the ARC’s directors are presidentially appointed, they do not have to be held accountable by voters, or even the individuals who are subject to their plans and initiatives. Additionally, the ARC is only one part of a much larger network of liberal-minded NGOs, businesses, and non-profit organizations attempting to develop Appalachia.

These intermediary organizations, much like the ‘professional’ environmental NGOs and nonprofits, do not always engage directly with the larger citizenry in their area of operation:

From the explicit critical perspective, an additional issue with environmental-organizations-as-middlemen is that such organizations become dedicated to incremental, intra-systemic reform only—instead of pursuing wholesale systemic re-formations targeting the liberal

⁷⁶Stump, Nicholas. F. 97.

⁷⁷Ibid. 97.

capitalist paradigm at large. Consequently, contemporary mainstream environmental organizations typically are characterized as being captured by neoliberal forces, and therefore wholly complicit in the paradigm.⁷⁸

Not only are these ‘middlemen’ the main regional actors attempting to mitigate ecological fallout from coal mining in the region, but similar groups of intermediaries are foundational to the ARC’s model of economic development. In the ‘POWER Award Summaries’ document, none of the plans listed are actually enacted by the ARC, but they instead provide the capital for local groups to enact the ARC’s model of development. For example, in 2021, the ARC provided nearly \$1.5 million to the ‘High Rocks Education Corporation’ to “...offer training and support services, create an accredited power skill certification, and pioneer a social enterprise mindset training curriculum. The network will be led by five anchor organizations that are experts in workforce, young talent, AmeriCorps, and STEM pipelines.”⁷⁹ Much like regional environmental regulation bodies, the ARC relies on a much larger network of ‘experts’ who can enact their liberal vision of economic development.

Even though the supposed beneficiaries of the plan are the working classes of the region, there is still a noticeable lack of direct citizen engagement. It is then feasible to view the ARC’s method as one that is generally disconnected from the true needs of the regional citizenry, and like the environmental law regime, the liberal economic development regime, “was also merely supportive of the liberal capitalist paradigm. Thus, for this core reason...environmental law was wholly incapable of stemming the global ecological crisis.”⁸⁰ Whereas environmental law is inadequate to address the ecological devastation created by capitalist accumulation and

⁷⁸Ibid. 99.

⁷⁹Appalachian Regional Commission. 2021. “POWER 2021 Award Summaries by State.” ARC. 17.

⁸⁰Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 101

extraction, so too are the liberal developmentalists' methods inadequate in addressing the harms of the mono-economy of coal.

As will be discussed in my content analysis, the ARC sets its goals through five-year plans that lay out objectives for their development plans. However, in the documents from the content analysis, there is little variation in the frameworks presented from year to year. This is representative of Freedman's discussion on liberalism's decontested concepts remaining as such across the dimensions of time, space, and morphology. According to him, political concepts obtain their meaning across these dimensions:

Political concepts acquire meaning not only through accumulative traditions of discourse, and not only through diverse cultural contents, but also by means of their particular structural position within a configuration of other political concepts. Hence ideologies are none other than the inevitable macroscopic consequences of attributing such meanings to a range of interrelated political concepts. Specific structures of political thinking do not exist prior to meaning but are themselves formed by permissible and legitimated codes and norms at the disposal of a given society, or by challenges to those prevailing codes and norms.⁸¹

Liberalism's core decontested concepts of liberty, individualism, and progress are therefore representative of these accumulated traditions of discourse. Stump showed that the ARC's understanding of economic development has its roots in the New Deal-era welfare policies informed by human capital theory. The decontested concepts are given meaning specifically through decision-making. Therefore, for the terms in the context of the ARC, they are given their meaning through the implementation of economic development plans. For example, workforce development, although not a decontested term, is an exemplar of the core term 'progress'.

Progress on its own would not have a legitimate political meaning without being demonstrated in a particular way in the ARC plans through workforce development initiatives or revitalization initiatives. By adhering to the decontested concepts, a political ideology inevitably limits itself

⁸¹Freedman, Michael. 1996. 4.

because the ideology necessitates that they can only be perceived and enacted in a *specific way*. For the ARC's version of progress then, it is only understood to have been achieved through the expansion of a waged labor force and expansion of so-called entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Another of the core terms of liberalism is 'liberty', and Freedman asserts that liberalism only interprets this in a 'particular idea-environment'.⁸² The liberal notion of liberty relies on a form of non-constraint, meaning that the individual is free to pursue her self-interest unhindered and employ all her various faculties to achieve this, which leads to a form of self-determination known as 'self-development.'⁸³ He writes,

To further situation non-constraint, choice-making, and valuable development in a context of individual interpersonal relationships suggests that there are areas of existence that concern individuals alone to the exclusion of others, that denying that space is harmful to individuals, and hence that the complex concept of liberty is vitally beneficial directly to individuals and indirectly to their shared institutions.⁸⁴

Liberty represents a freedom from the imposition of external preferences. In the context of this quote, Freedman asserts that the achievement of liberty for the individual is the key to achieving liberty for their shared institutions or communities. This is directly observable in the ARC's plans for workforce development as the key to achieving overall community progress is ensured through the self-development of the individual, which inevitably means the exclusion of other individuals.

A contradiction is immediately evident because the achievement of self-development relies on the exclusion of other individuals and inequality within the larger community as some achieve self-development and others do not. What this means, is that liberalism is under no

⁸²Freedman, Michael. 1996. 147.

⁸³Freedman, Michael. 1996. 147.

⁸⁴Freedman, Michael. 1996. 147.

obligation to provide equality or more egalitarian modes of existence for individuals due to 'cultural constraints.' As the decontested terms of liberalism develop, they are constrained by the existing cultural structures and understandings that a society has already established. Freeden asserts that

The intention of equality has been shaped mostly by features of the core concepts of rationality and individuality. The universalization of rationality as an attribute of human nature and its attachment to the individual freedom to choose (in pursuit of one's own life-plans, whether reflectively or not, as long as they did not critically impede those of others) contains aspects of equality as a consequence of these premises. Liberalism has thus been able to incorporate the two ineliminable components of the concept of equality: the postulation of a common humanity in virtue of a shared rational capacity, in which the worth of the individual is commutable into the worth of any other, and the negation of irrelevant differences among individuals. Such differences are those immaterial to the free and rational pursuit by all of individual life-plans, for each individual is assumed potentially to be in possession of some merit.⁸⁵

Liberal subjects are in theory starting from the same point on the path to self-development, regardless of actual material conditions, and each individual has the potential to achieve self-development through the mechanisms provided by a liberal form of governance. However, in practice the ideological desires of the liberal project fall apart as the case of Appalachia has shown. The economic and political structures of liberal capitalism create a society where only some have the opportunity to achieve a self-development that results in the amassing of wealth and political clout, while others are left on the margins and remain in a cycle of trying to achieve self-development through inadequate means.

The ARC relies on this same model of liberalism, even when it accounts for the lower starting point of many of the individuals its plans are supposed to help. Their solutions rely on market mechanisms and a liberal ideology that, although it asserts its goal is allowing each individual to achieve her maximum potential, posits each individual as capable of achieving self-

⁸⁵Freeden, Michael. 1996. 159-60.

development through participation in the workforce, totally disregarding the material constraints many of the targeted beneficiaries face. For an individual living near the poverty line in an area where there are mainly service sector jobs and few if any manufacturing jobs, they are immensely constrained in their ability to work towards self-development.

Chapter 3: Content Analysis of ARC Plans

i. Introduction

To illustrate the ARC's avowal of the liberal model of economic development, I perform a content analysis using their two five-year plans for the fiscal years of 2016-2020 and the newly-released plan for 2021-2026, two documents that summarize the POWER funded projects in 2021 and all funded plans from 2015-2021, an executive summary of the "Kentucky Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project", and a document produced by Chamberlin and Dunn LLC that evaluates the success of the various POWER Initiative plans. For this last document, I specifically focus on how the ARC measures the success of their implemented projects. Through my analysis, I highlight key terms that are integral to liberalism as both an ideology and mode of governance. While I use peripheral terms that are specific to my project, I base these on the core 'decontested concepts' of liberalism offered by Freeden. According to Freeden, there are three decontested concepts that are foundational to liberal ideology: liberty, individualism, and progress. Freeden draws on Mill's definition of these terms to emphasize the interconnectedness of each of them:

The relationship of liberty, individualism, and progress is one of mutual dependence and definition. It is impossible to disentangle them and to position one alone at the core of Mill's argument; all three are most usefully regarded as core concepts. Each manifests an ineliminable component: for liberty, it is the notion of non-constraint; for individualism, the notion of the person as a separate entity possessing unique attributes and capable of choice; for progress, the notion of movement from less desirable to more desirable states—"the idea of moving onward", as Mill puts it.⁸⁶

What is particularly important in the context of the ARC is this understanding of individualism.

Although the individual is part of a larger 'community', for liberal practitioners, the individual

⁸⁶Freeden, Michael. *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. 145.

herself takes precedence over the larger community, because if she was only thought of as part of a community, then she would lose her freedom to strive for self-determination. Freedom's description of progress is also significant because the need for progress implies that the current state of something is undesirable and necessitates improvement. As I show, this is directly visible in the ARC's plans for Appalachian economic development. This is not to diminish the very real hardships of the region but is instead a criticism of how the ARC proposes to reach a more desirable state, namely, by individual improvement as a method to improve the overall community and how they measure progress in general.

The goal of the content analysis is to provide a contestation of these decontested terms and use the empirical information from the plans to support my theoretical critiques of liberalism. While the three above-mentioned terms are the main concepts I evaluate in the ARC's plans, I also have thirteen peripheral terms that characterize the core concepts. The peripheral terms are what prevent the core concepts from being contested because they can be interchanged with the core concepts without disrupting the foundation of the ideology. These peripheral terms are what most closely align with the ARC's 2016-2020 'Strategic Investment Goals' which inform the basis of their various development plans. These goals are: Economic Opportunities, Ready Workforce, Critical Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Assets, and Leadership and Community Capacity.⁸⁷ For the ARC, economic development can only be realized within the framework given by these investment goals, with particular attention given to access to capital and a development of the individual. The ARC is not the body that actually carries out the plans, they instead provide the access to capital for individual organizations to carry out the strategic

⁸⁷Appalachian Regional Commission. "Investing in Appalachia's Future: The Appalachian Regional Commission's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities. 2016-2020." ARC. November 2015. 13.

investment goals. Therefore, the ARC is simply one part of a larger network of liberal economic development groups throughout Appalachia that try to achieve development in the region through the investment priorities.

In the POWER initiative's plans (which encompass 393 individual grants/projects across Appalachia) there is a heavy focus on developing a workforce and creating entrepreneurial 'ecosystems' as a solution to the decline of the coal industry. One example of this is in the *2021 POWER Award Summaries* that lists each of the 62 project investments made by the ARC in 2021. Noticeable about each of the grants' descriptions is the focus on individual development, whether it is through workforce training or designation of funds for the purposes of supporting individual entrepreneurial development.⁸⁸ For example, in Eastern Kentucky, \$1.5 million was granted to the organization 'Mountain Association for Community Economic Development' to

leverage market opportunities, expand technical assistance, and finance business start-ups, growth, and innovation. The grantee will direct these strategies toward small businesses, entrepreneurs, local governments, and community anchor institutions critical to building diverse and resilient local economies in the 54 ARC counties of Eastern Kentucky.⁸⁹

While this is just one plan out of several hundred enacted since 2015, the language used above shows how the ARC conceptualizes progress, economic development, and community growth in general. For the ARC, individual progress and economic development are only possible through capitalist market mechanisms and the simultaneous development of the individual in an explicitly *liberal* way. Their goal is not to disrupt the already existing economic and political structures in the region, but to instead work within the framework that these same structures have *already created*. Their function is to set the boundaries for what economic development can be: liberal.

⁸⁸Appalachian Regional Commission. "POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021." ARC, December 2021.

⁸⁹POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021. 2.

Through this content analysis, I contest the deconstested. By contesting these terms, I aim to disrupt the ideology of liberal economic development and highlight its inherent contradictions and shortcomings and its overall inadequacy for meeting the challenges of Central Appalachia's economic situation. To provide empirical support for my analysis, I use the content analysis program 'Dedoose' to show the frequency of the various decontested terms and their supporting terms in the documents. The purpose of this is to quantifiably demonstrate that the ARC is adherent to the terms and their accompanying ideology.

ii. Data and Method

I put the above-listed documents from the ARC into Dedoose and applied my codes to excerpts where the core decontested terms and their supporting peripheral terms were present. 'Liberty' is accompanied by access, empowerment, and freedom. For 'individualism': entrepreneurship, self-development, leaders/leadership, and self-realization. Lastly, for 'progress': improvement, revitalization, asset capitalization, diversification, revitalization, and workforce development. I also used an additional code called 'quotables' that I applied to excerpts that best exemplified the various parent codes and peripheral codes. While more documents could have been used, I chose these because they are the most recently published and comprehensively demonstrate the ideology and methodology of the ARC and POWER initiative. There are two documents that summarize the various plans that the POWER initiative has funded throughout all of Appalachia, but one of them only included plans from the fiscal year 2021. The second document included all awards from 2015-2021, so I used it to better demonstrate the kinds of initiatives that have received funding since the POWER initiative was created. For the

latter document I only focused on awards that were in the Central Appalachian region (Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia). I did this because my project is mainly focused on this region in Appalachia, and it is also one of the most impoverished areas of the larger Appalachian region. I then used two of the ARC's *Five-Year Plan* documents for FY 2016-2020 and the newest one for FY 2021-2026. These five-year plans highlight the overall framework that the ARC uses when implementing its plans and what the guiding strategy for development will look like for the years to come. These documents also clearly lay out the ARC's five-year 'Strategic Investment Goals' which are representative of how the decontested terms will be enacted in policy. I also included an evaluation performed by a third-party organization (Chamberlin and Dunn LLC) that evaluates the evolution of the POWER Initiative over time and its impacts, successes, and failures. Lastly, I included an executive summary of the *Kentucky Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project*. This document was much shorter than the others but was beneficial for a demonstration of what POWER can look like in action in Central Appalachia.

After applying my chosen codes to the six documents, I ended up with a total 200 excerpts where the decontested terms and peripheral terms were present. To clarify, the excerpts were not pre-selected, they were the resulting output after applying the parent and child codes to the documents. While many of the excerpts explicitly had a presence of either the decontested terms and their peripheral terms, I also selected those that were still demonstrative of the core terms even if they were not explicitly mentioned. After analyzing the 'code application' it was immediately evident that the most-used terms were the peripheral terms that were child codes of the core terms 'progress' and 'individualism'. For example, in the POWER Awards Summary for 2015-2021, excerpts that mentioned 'workforce development' appeared 63 times, and this

was also the most prevalent term in all the documents, with a total application throughout of 98. The most-used peripheral terms are as follows in descending order: workforce development (98), entrepreneurship (70), improvement (64), self-development (55), and revitalization (37). In terms of the core decontested concepts, this means that ‘progress’ was used the most throughout the documents with individualism being used the second most.

Additionally, I used Dedoose’s ‘code co-occurrence’ analytic function to see which excerpts had the presence of multiple codes and if there was a significant overlap of two or more codes in the same excerpt. The highest co-occurrence was between workforce development and individualism, and workforce development and self-development, with both constituting 42 co-occurrences respectively. Additionally, ‘workforce development’ had the highest co-occurrence among all terms with 153 and improvement was the second highest with 129. Based on the ARC’s strategic investment goals, this data reinforces that the plans represent and support these goals, particularly those related to ‘ready workforce’ and ‘economic opportunities.’ From the data, it is clear that the ARC is primarily concerned with developing a workforce that will be able to be successful in the region’s economic transition away from coal mining.

iii. Discussion

These findings need to be connected to the larger implications of liberalism as discussed by Freeden. Key to liberalism’s conception of the individual is a particular understanding of ‘rationality.’ Freeden describes Mill’s understanding of rationality as “behaving rationally, pursuing one’s happiness, entails for example, the attainment of virtue, of wealth, and of power

as aspects of happiness.”⁹⁰ To pursue one’s happiness means to strive for ‘self-development’, which for the ARC means a participation in the myriad of workforce development programs proposed and then to obtain wealth, which is supposed to raise the overall standing of the community. The ARC’s understanding of the community and individual can be viewed through what Freeden calls ‘organicist liberalism’, meaning it focuses explicitly on the promotion of communal interests while still emphasizing individual rights which inevitably leads to a contrast between the ‘general good’ and individual rights.⁹¹ He writes,

This notion of community, while allowing for the direct promotion of communal interests, proffers an area of human action in which individual rights are necessary to social health and in which choice and autonomy are possible within the confines of a rational, directly accessible, common good regulated by a democratically controlled state. Conversely, the pursuit of the common welfare is a prerequisite for the protection of such rights.⁹²

Of importance in this quote is the emphasis on the ‘rational’ common good. Liberalism creates and defines the confines of how community improvement can be rationalized. The American liberal state emphasizes the importance of the individual’s right to free choice, and this has translated to a noticeable lack of state involvement in providing assurance of the economic welfare of its citizens. This is how contemporary American liberals understand freedom, ‘not as a condition individuals were in, but as a process of achievement.’⁹³ In practice this has translated to a reduction of the welfare capacities of the American state, and this is embodied in the ARC and how it approaches development.

What is most striking about the ARC’s view of individual development is their insistence on making this an educational process that can begin in primary and secondary school. It is best

⁹⁰Freeden, Michael. 1996. 149.

⁹¹Freeden, Michael. 1996. 254.

⁹²Freeden, Michael. 1996. 254.

⁹³Freeden, Michael. 1996. 255.

shown by the ‘EntreEd K-14: Every Student, Every Year’ in West Virginia. The project’s stated goal is

[To] enable[s] K–12 teachers to integrate entrepreneurial content and context into delivery of required standards in any subject or grade level. The project will educate the next generation of Appalachia’s workforce to create their own businesses to drive the local economy.⁹⁴

The plan demonstrates how the ARC focuses on the individual and how they need to be developed in a way informed by liberal rationality. Mill conceptualizes the individual as a ‘separate entity possessing unique attributes and is capable of choice’⁹⁵ and when conjoined with rationality, liberalism assumes that the individual who possesses these unique attributes will make *rational* choices that maximize her self-development. Self-development is then supposed to lead to an attainment of liberty which allows the individual the space to make these rational choices which benefit the larger society and its shared institutions.

Another important aspect of the ARC’s plans, outlined in their strategic investment goals, is ‘capitalizing on natural and cultural assets’. The phrase mostly refers to the various ecotourism projects that the ARC has funded across the region, and they assert that tourism leads to job creation. I categorized excerpts of tourism plans under ‘asset capitalization’ and ‘improvement’. The ARC asserts the region has many natural and cultural assets, but they are not currently used productively. The often-stated goal for these plans is to

leverage natural assets and strong cultural heritage to promote new or enhanced traveler experiences in order to increase tourism spending and create tourism as an economic driver of the region, whose economy has been adversely affected by the decline in the coal industry.⁹⁶

⁹⁴POWER Award Summary by State as of December 2021. 94.

⁹⁵Freeden, Michael. 1996. 145.

⁹⁶POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021. 16.

This excerpt was tagged with the codes ‘asset capitalization’ and ‘improvement’. The excerpt comes from the *Restoring Pride in Kentucky’s Appalachia-Phase II* project and the grant was awarded to the organization ‘Eastern Kentucky PRIDE.’⁹⁷ What is noticeable about the language of this plan is the form of improvement it is supposed to bring: the economic growth will not come from the residents already living there, but outside travelers (they projected 2,200 total visitors per year) who will pay to come see these natural and cultural assets. Both asset capitalization and improvement fall under the decontested term of ‘progress’ which represents a ‘movement from a less desirable to a more desirable state’.⁹⁸

Although not explicitly stated, the underlying assumption of ecotourism plans is that Appalachia is not ‘desirable’ and has to be made so through costly marketing campaigns and the creation and support of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Even the title of this plan demonstrates this idea of improvement through the phrase ‘Restoring Pride’, as it assumes residents of the region lack pride in their home. In this particular case, the project ‘will include a new tourism website; print, billboard, television, and online advertising...and branded merchandise’.⁹⁹ Despite this, the ARC’s own evaluation of the ecotourism projects has shown that the projected number of visitors was not met.

iii. Workforce Development and Historical Understandings of Poverty

It is important to understand how the ARC conceptualizes improvement, and how this connects specifically to their emphasis on workforce development. As discussed thus far, the

⁹⁷POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021. 16.

⁹⁸Freedon, Michael. 1996. 145.

⁹⁹POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021. 16.

ARC is caught within a model of economic development that is explicitly informed by capitalist market mechanisms and focuses on individualistic modes of improvement, typically through workforce development programs. For the ARC, improvement comes in stages, but does not necessarily take community improvement as the starting point. Improvement instead begins at the individual level, which supposedly leads to overall regional improvement through a strict adherence to the logic of the capitalist market. This logic of improvement¹⁰⁰ relies on private ownership of massive swathes of land and creates the conditions for widespread economic hardship in Central Appalachia, beginning with the coal and timber industries in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. There have been several studies that quantify these landholdings, most notably a 2011 study by the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy that showed that 10 individuals and companies owned 50% of all private land in West Virginia.¹⁰¹ The logic of improvement and primacy of private property are closely linked because private ownership is a requisite for land to even be improved, as was historically demonstrated by the coal companies, and positioned Appalachia as a peripheral zone within the larger American political economy.¹⁰²

This necessitated a historical constitution of Appalachia and its people as ‘premodern’ and ‘uncivilized’ that allowed for a normalization of the destructive practices of the coal and timber industries: “The social construction of Appalachia as premodern or savage has allowed it

¹⁰⁰ This term comes from Tzouvala’s *Capitalism as Civilization: A History of International Law*. She defines this logic of improvement, “The logic of improvement conceptualised and promoted the historically contingent form capitalist modernity had assumed in the West as the only morally acceptable state of being and equated any deviation from it with collective moral failure.” (Tzouvala, Ntina. *Capitalism as Civilisation: A History of International Law*. Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law. Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 55.)

¹⁰¹Boettner, Todd. “Who Owns West Virginia in the 21st Century?” West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy. West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, November 20, 2017. <https://wvpolicy.org/who-owns-west-virginia-in-the-21st-century-2/>.

¹⁰²Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 18.

to serve as a ‘sacrificial scapegoat’ for the atrocities of capitalism, normalizing devastating practices.”¹⁰³ Even today, this view of Appalachia as culturally backwards persists and it is typically viewed as culturally homogenous by those who live outside the region. Catte (2018) discusses these mainstream cultural conceptions of Appalachia as a backwards place and how it historically created the conditions for companies to plunder the region’s natural resources and exploit the labor of the population.

Historically, coal companies viewed their project as a benevolent one in that they were bringing civilization and development to the backwards ‘other’. To improve their situation, the companies, politicians, and local elites believed integration into the free market and wage labor were key to developing an industrious and civilized society,

The poor might improve their station through hard work and industry, but those of greater means owed them nothing in this struggle. This theory befit a world enthralled by the free market and the competitive accumulation of capital. Many industrialists felt little responsibility to their workforce, often believing their social assistance would encourage an undesirable overpopulation of the lower classes.¹⁰⁴

Catte’s description of the companies’ views of development in Appalachia illustrate similarities to the ARC’s own views, as both rely on individual improvement. The individual improves herself not by social assistance or welfare, but rather through an industrious attitude and enthusiastic participation in the workforce. As the ARC plans show, the individual and her freedom to work towards self-development are what create economic development for a region. They will not be given anything, but instead have to participate in programs that will allow them to be more easily integrated into the capitalist market and create exchange-value for the capitalist class.

¹⁰³Stump, Nicholas F. 2015. 19. Citing Bell, Shannon 2016. 17.

¹⁰⁴Catte, Elizabeth. 2018. *What You Are Getting Wrong about Appalachia*. First edition. Cleveland, Ohio: Belt Publishing. 42.

The individualistic notion of self-improvement has a long history in capitalist states' understandings of the causes of poverty and helps elucidate why America in particular is so averse to redistributive welfare policies. It is necessary to historically contextualize this view within 19th century neoclassical understandings of free markets, which stated "unemployed workers are responsible for their situation and are therefore undeserving of assistance. The result is a personalization of unemployment, and therefore poverty, similar to that implied in the older Puritan idea."¹⁰⁵ However, as the contemporary conditions of the American worker show, employment is not necessarily a remedy to poverty. The neoclassical approach to poverty alleviation has resulted in the individualization and personalization of economic life, where poverty and unemployment become failings of the individual, therefore freeing the state of responsibility to mitigate the two issues. This view is blatantly demonstrated by the American government, regardless of party affiliations, as the following quote from President Clinton's 1998 State of the Union address shows:

A strong nation rests on the rock of responsibility. A society rooted in responsibility must first promote the value of work, not welfare. We can be proud that after decades of finger-pointing and failure, together we ended the old welfare system. And we're now replacing welfare checks with paychecks.¹⁰⁶

There is then a reliance on the idea of individual responsibility for one's economic life in the liberal state which has resulted in the dismissal of welfare policies in favor of workforce development ones.

In the context of the ARC, this individualized framework is clearly demonstrated, as most of their plans support workforce development policies for individual improvement as opposed to redistributive welfare policies that would ensure a certain standard of living. This relates to

¹⁰⁵Levine, David P, and S. Abu Turab Rizvi. 2010. *Poverty, Work and Freedom: Political Economy and the Moral Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 30

¹⁰⁶Levine, David P. and S. Abu Turab Rizvi. 2010. 37.

Freeden's notion of liberalism's conception of liberty where there is no state imposition of 'external preferences' on the individual and they can strive to achieve a true self-development unhindered. This view of welfare I described additionally categorizes individuals as the 'deserving and undeserving' poor, wherein the undeserving are solely responsible for their impoverishment because of individual choices.¹⁰⁷

Liberty, not development, is the first and foremost priority for the ARC, even if it is not explicitly stated. This view of the liberal ideology relates to the neoclassical economists' conception that emerged in the 20th century, who asserted true freedom is realized in the free market. This also requires the fomentation of a form of mortality in relation to the market for individual subjects. According to Whyte,

What Hayek called the morals of the market were a set of individualistic, commercial values that prioritized the pursuit of self-interest above the development of common purposes. A market society required a moral framework that sanctioned wealth accumulation and inequality, promoted individual and familial responsibility, and fostered submission to the impersonal results of the market process at the expense of the deliberate pursuit of collectively formulated ends. It also requires moral obligations that are limited to the requirement that we refrain from harming others, and do not require positive obligations to others.¹⁰⁸

This quote is representative of the non-violent coercion that liberal markets necessitate, while still adhering to Freedon's discussion of not imposing external preferences. In the market, each rational and unconstrained individual works to ensure their own individualistic development within the confines of the market mechanisms, and they are under no obligation to identify with a collectivist purpose. This in turn applies to the state, and Hayek argued that welfare could be realized on the market by individuals:

Hayek contended that 'society' is simply a spontaneous order that emerges as individuals and families pursue their welfare on the market...A declaration of rights should do no more

¹⁰⁷Levine, David P. and S. Abu Turab Rizvi. 2010. 38.

¹⁰⁸Whyte, Jessica. *The Morals of the Market: Human Rights and the Rise of Neoliberalism*. Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2019. 17.

than the ‘time honored political and civil rights’ have always done, he argued: ‘delimit individual domains’ in which private initiative, entrepreneurialism, and personal responsibility can flourish.¹⁰⁹

This quote is an excellent encapsulation of the individualist tendencies of liberalism. This ideology became most dominant in the ‘neoliberal’ era of capitalism in the late 1960s and 1970s, and it has shaped citizens and economies since then, including the ARC. While there are ‘societies’, individuals are under no obligation to their community to work towards a collective purpose or strive for mass political organization. Instead, they work towards individual improvement as this will create the best outcomes for the larger society.

Neoliberal markets also create what are called the ‘margins of freedom’, “By pathologizing mass politics as a threat to individual freedom, neoliberal liberty rights seek to confine human action within what I call the ‘margin of freedom’ offered by a liberal capitalist order. The neoliberal right to liberty is the right to do anything that does not harm the market.”¹¹⁰ Much like Freedman’s analysis of liberalism, Whyte’s analysis highlights that neoliberalism creates the confines of what liberty can be in practice, much like the ARC’s liberal ideology sets the margins of what economic development can be in practice. Both liberalism and neoliberalism create a certain form of precarity for its subjects which has a component of coercion as well, specifically through market fluctuations. These fluctuations ‘penalize disobedience’ and ‘recompense obedience’ to the desires of the labor market.¹¹¹ Therefore, Whyte concludes that the subject of the market is not free in any expansive sense, and is free only to achieve self-development and liberty through the margins established by (neo)liberal ideology.

¹⁰⁹Whyte, Jessica. 2019. 70.

¹¹⁰Whyte, Jessica. 2019. 26.

¹¹¹Whyte, Jessica. 2019.

Poverty itself is not the issue, but rather *how* someone became poor is the main concern, and so long as an individual is willing to improve herself through waged work and training programs, then she will be more deserving of welfare. This is reflected in the ARC's plans, as individuals are supported only if they try to improve their standing through workforce development and seek out gainful employment by way of training programs. It is helpful to conceptualize the ARC's mentality also within the moral order where the goal of having a job is

not creative expression, but the fulfillment of duty to the community. The virtue of such work lies not in its connection to freedom, but in the way it expresses and confirms the primacy of the group and the member's aspiration to belong. Here, virtue means service. That the moral order cannot be a setting for freedom and human creativity means that any idea organized around the norm of freedom and its expression in creative living must stand beyond the moral order.¹¹²

As already demonstrated, the overarching goal for the ARC is community and regional improvement, but this must come first by way of individual improvement. Through self-improvement, the individual is simultaneously fulfilling their duty to improve the *community* so that it may achieve progress.

These workforce development plans constitute a massive swathe of the ARC's financial investments, especially in the POWER initiative, as my content analysis shows. To provide an example, in Kentucky in 2017, the ARC gave a \$3.5 million grant to the Big Sandy Community and Technical College in Prestonsburg for the plan "Eastern Kentucky Coal County Transformation". Notable about this plan is that it is an 'employer-driven' workforce development program and is

focused on building the digital economy and strengthening digital innovation and entrepreneurship across a 16-county region in eastern Kentucky.... [it] will establish

¹¹²Levine, David P. and S. Abu Turab Rizvi. 2010. 93-4.

educational programs that develop workforce skills in emerging regional career clusters such as cybersecurity, medical coding, and advanced manufacturing.¹¹³

The emphasis on employer-driven development is notable here, because it highlights that these plans are centered around the needs of already-existing businesses and focuses on shaping individuals to meet these needs. Thus, it is about improving the individual in a way that meets the overall requirements of the market and simultaneously adheres to its logic, training individuals for jobs which are supposedly going to be important in the coming years.

The ARC's plans show that an individual is only valuable if they can contribute to the capitalist free market and provide their labor for its continued expansion. However, this goes beyond economic development and points towards a specific way of shaping subjects and creating 'worthy citizens' as Daggett (2019) says. As illustrated by the empirical data in my content analysis, the overwhelming majority of the ARC's plans emphasize 'workforce development' as a key factor in achieving widespread economic development.¹¹⁴ In a capitalist system, to be a worker means to be a human. Daggett asserts that this conceptualization of work as so significant to human existence is a relatively new phenomenon that has historical connections to new forms of energy production during the Industrial Revolution:

Like energy, work integrates manifold streams of ancient wisdom into a purportedly novel, modern construct. It is a move shared by all ideologies of progress: in order to show improvement, it is necessary to assemble a history of connected practices that demonstrate a linear progression, against which the current moment is to be compared favorably.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ARC. POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021. 18.

¹¹⁴In my content analysis of the six ARC documents, 'workforce development' appeared 98 times in over 200 selected excerpts from the plans and was the term with the highest number of co-occurrences with other terms at 153.

¹¹⁵Daggett, Cara New. 2019. *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work*. Elements. Durham: Duke University Press. 84.

The notion of progress is significant here because it is the foundation of liberal-democratic capitalism, and therefore liberal economic development. Progress is one of the decontested concepts of liberalism and is thought to be the main goal of a society, but it is important to evaluate what this progress actually means in practice.

For capitalism, progress means an expansion of the market (i.e. zones of appropriation and exploitation) and strives to increase the number of individuals performing wage-labor. Daggett draws connections to the perceived necessity of work in a capitalist society to “a hollowed-out Protestant asceticism, joined to thermodynamic assumptions about energy, [and] persists in attaching citizens to the fictional necessity of waged work.”¹¹⁶ While the Protestant feature is not as visible in the 21st century, the idea of work as a requisite for being a valued member of society persists, including in the ARC’s models of economic development. This leads us to a discussion of what work is valued and what work is not valued. Waged labor is the most valued, whereas the reproductive labor that *creates and sustains productive labor* is not valued, meaning it is not waged work. While this ideology of work is most visible in the plans for general workforce development, it is particularly observable in the so-called ‘second chance’ work plans, which are usually geared towards individuals recovering from substance abuse disorders. For example, in Kentucky the ARC invested \$1.2 million into the ‘Reliance Works (Second Chance Employment Expansion to Eastern Kentucky)’, which seeks to

create jobs and increase labor participation rates by establishing new business ventures using the proven workforce model for second-chance employment that IH [Isaiah House] successfully implemented in other areas of Kentucky since 2015. Additionally, the project will provide participants with recovery support, including transitional housing, peer support, transportation, telehealth counseling, and accountability through drug testing.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶Daggett, Cara. 2019. 87.

¹¹⁷Appalachian Regional Commission. 2021. “POWER 2021 Award Summaries by State.” ARC. 2.

I chose this example not to criticize wanting to provide support systems for those suffering from substance abuse disorder, but rather to point out how liberal economic development models rely on creating a particular kind of subject, namely one who has improved herself through labor.

This kind of self-improvement through participation in waged labor is how liberal notions of progress are realized. The underlying assumption of the ARC's plans and liberal economic development more generally, even if not explicitly stated, is that non-participation (or idleness) is a moral failing, and additionally means that one is undeserving of assistance.¹¹⁸ This conception has its historical roots in the Victorian period of the 19th century when industrial capitalism began to solidify itself as the dominant mode of production:

Work remained a moral concern for social reformers, but it was also approachable as a physiological problem with 'each aspect balancing and reinforcing the other to create an internal equilibrium between the needs of the body and the soul, an economy of physiology and morality.'¹¹⁹

In the case of Appalachia this was particularly observable when the coal industry was at its most dominant. Every aspect of the workers' and their families' lives were controlled by the coal companies: their houses, churches, stores, and schools were all owned, built, and paid for by the coal companies.¹²⁰ Workers were watched closely to ensure they were exhibiting the correct work ethic and murmurings of unionizing were picked up on by the companies and often met with brute force. So not only did the companies own the productive waged labor of the miners, but also the 'unproductive' and socially necessary unpaid *reproductive* labor of the family. This led to a noticeable gendered division of work in the coal economy in which men were mainly the

¹¹⁸Daggett, Cara. 2019. 90.

¹¹⁹Daggett, Cara. 2019. 90.

¹²⁰Scott, Rebecca. 2010. 73.

wage-earners while women performed the work in the home that allowed the men to continue their work in the mines.

This gendered dynamic of labor has become increasingly important as the industry has declined. The coal industry was historically defined by a ‘hypermasculine industry’ due to how difficult and dangerous the work tended to be.¹²¹ It constructed the image of the masculinized family breadwinner, who risked life and limb each day in the mines to feed his family, and this has long been a source of pride for former miners and their descendants. This constructed masculine image has been capitalized upon by organizations like the FOC, and they have continued to perpetuate it: “Thanks to organized labor, mining has provided a relatively high wage, and a miner is understood locally as a provider, a family man. In other words, one way that mining is understood is relationally—a miner exists in a certain relationship to a family of dependents.”¹²² However, this family dynamic has been disrupted in recent years as job losses in the industry have increased and, unable to find work, the family has come to depend on the woman of the family to provide:

Historically, mining town economies were very homogeneous, with most of the men working either as miners or managers for the company or in some mining support capacity. The company supplied everything: housing, shopping, schools, doctors, and so on. Company houses were reserved for the families of employees.... By constructing living quarters for their workers, the coal companies prescribed a particular heterosexual lifestyle for their employees. Thus the companies' control over workers and their families extended from the overtly political—union activism, for instance, could get a family evicted—into the personal.¹²³

This level of control of the workers is certainly unique, but also has been characteristic of industrial employers since the method of Fordist assembly line production in the 20th century became the dominant one. Capitalist production and profit reached a historically unprecedented

¹²¹Scott, Rebecca. 2010. 65.

¹²²Scott, Rebecca. 2010. 67.

¹²³Scott, Rebecca. 2010. 73.

scale during this time and therefore required the creation of a specific kind of worker, namely, one who could be easily controlled by his employer *outside* of the workplace.

Stump offers more insight into the particularities of the liberal model of workforce development in Appalachia that began in the New Deal era's expanded welfare state policies. He says that this model relied on a 'human capital theory',

which held that deficiencies among impoverished peoples could be remedied through workforce training and, on the broader scale, cultural rehabilitation; per this school, supposed Appalachian deficiencies were traced to individual and broader regional-cultural failings—i.e., that the roots of poverty emanate from the culture and social psychology of the poor themselves.¹²⁴

Although the ARC does not necessarily view the people of the region as 'deficient', they make it clear that developing a strong workforce and social rehabilitation of those not engaged in waged labor are the keys to improvement. This is mainly because of the adherence to the decontested terms of liberalism and how they have maintained their meaning throughout time, space, and changing morphologies. Even though the ARC might present their plans as more progressive and change certain aspects and language to match the current needs of the region, they are still trapped within the same framework that informed the New Deal-era developmentalists. Instead of addressing and evaluating the structural economic and political conditions that led to the impoverishment of Appalachia, adherents of the liberal development model avoid radical systemic change in favor of reliance on the above-mentioned human capital theory and economic growth.¹²⁵

The question remains however, as to why more radical change has not been attempted and what are the roadblocks to implementing more progressive redistributive policies that

¹²⁴Stump, Nicholas. F. 2021. 79.

¹²⁵Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 79.

address the root causes of poverty with solutions outside of the capitalist market? Stump provides the following answer:

The local elite was willing to tolerate the work of the development association as long as the innovations involved were merely functioning innovations and not restructuring innovations which would threaten the social structure. Indeed, as Perry argues, challenging both exploitative corporations and complicit local elites—while organizing the greater, subordinated Appalachian citizen at the grassroots level ought to have been the central aim of the War on Poverty.¹²⁶

This quote is in the context of the ARC's creation during the War on Poverty in 1965, but is still applicable to the contemporary ARC and its methods of development. The role of local elites has been one of historical complicity in the economic exploitation of Appalachia, and the ARC itself is largely composed of these same elites, or at least people who share the same interests as the elites. It is not hard to ascertain then why there is not a real grassroots engagement with the working classes of the region.

This has been the history of the political and economic structures in the region, most notably when coal was the primary economic driver of the region and local elites were working closely with the outside venture capitalists to ensure local support for companies did not wane, especially in times of labor unrest. Overall, the ARC is a product of the history of neoclassical notions of individual improvement as a means of improving the larger society. The Puritan insistence on realizing one's potential through work and basing assistance on merit has been a main characteristic of the American liberal project specifically. The ARC was created just prior to the establishment of neoliberal ideology as the dominant logic of American capitalism, but they have fully adopted this in their methods of economic development and plan to maintain this commitment for the foreseeable future.

¹²⁶Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 81.

iv. Falling Short of Their Own Goals

The ARC was officially created in 1965, although the original idea for the commission came from President Kennedy in 1963.¹²⁷ Since then, the ARC has invested \$4.5 billion into 28,000 regional development plans. With so much time, money, and energy spent by the commission trying to develop Appalachia, it can be hard to comprehend how it has fallen so far short of its goals. It would be too simplistic to solely place the blame on the ARC (although they have certainly been a main component), but instead the blame is better placed on the ARC's position within a liberal ideology that constricts their visions of what development can be in practice. The ARC is an organization that is 'by elites, for elites', and this means it creates and maintains an exclusion of the same individuals they are supposedly trying to help. This can be attributed to the organizational structure of the ARC, which is composed of 13 state governors and a presidentially appointed federal co-chair.¹²⁸

Today, the ARC is led by federal co-chair Gayle Manchin and Maryland Governor Larry Hogan. Manchin is the wife of current West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin, and the couple has long been involved in Appalachian politics, including Sen. Manchin's five-year stint as West Virginia governor from 2005-2010.¹²⁹ Additionally, Sen. Manchin has substantial stock holdings in the coal and natural gas company 'Enersystems Inc.', which comprises about 35% of his

¹²⁷Appalachian Regional Commission. (2020, August 25). *ARC's history and work in Appalachia*. Appalachian Regional Commission. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-history-and-work-in-appalachia/>

¹²⁸Appalachian Regional Commission. (2022, January 3). *ARC's structure and leadership*. Appalachian Regional Commission. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-structure-and-leadership/>

¹²⁹Joe Manchin III. National Governors Association. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.nga.org/governor/joe-manchin-iii-2/>

current net worth.¹³⁰ On his own website, Manchin identifies his priorities as a Senator are to create jobs and ‘put our fiscal house in order.’¹³¹ Notably, federal co-chair Gayle Manchin’s primary goals as leader of the ARC are “to support the creation of economic opportunities in the Appalachian Region, improve broadband access and critical infrastructure in Appalachian communities, and address the region’s opioid crisis.”¹³²

I discuss the Manchins not as an *ad hominem* attack on their personal character, but to instead highlight the material interests of the ‘elites’ in Appalachia and how the ARC is informed by these same elitist ideologies in their development plans. What is visible in the ARC is an organization that is totally beholden to the liberal model of economic growth and reliance on market mechanisms to develop the region through an explicitly top-down model, which largely ignores input from working class community members and is led by individuals like the Manchins who have economic stakes in maintaining the current structure as is.

While it is clear what the ARC’s objectives are in the implementation of the plans, I want to discuss here how they measure the success of implementation. This is highlighted most clearly in Chamberlin and Dunn’s evaluation of the POWER Initiative. The report measures success within three different sectors: individuals, businesses and organizations, and communities and regions.¹³³ The report focuses on ‘success stories’ and highlights three key themes for each of the

¹³⁰FinePrint. (2021, September 10). *71% of Manchin's investment income is from Enersystems*. FinePrint. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.fineprintdata.com/post/manchin-enersystems>

¹³¹*About Joe*. About | U.S. Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.manchin.senate.gov/about>

¹³²Appalachian Regional Commission. (2022, January 7). *Federal co-chair Gayle Conelly Manchin*. Appalachian Regional Commission. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.arc.gov/staff/federal-co-chair-gayle-conelly-manchin/>

¹³³Chamberlin, Molly, and Nicole Dunn. “POWER Initiative Evaluation: The POWER of Change. Stories of Results for Individuals, Businesses, and Communities.” ARC in Association with Chamberlin and Dunn LLC, September 2021. 6.

dimensions measured for success. For the individual, the themes are: providing job and career opportunities, offering individual skill-building, and support for recovery from substance abuse disorder. For businesses and organizations: increasing revenue and decreasing costs, improved ability to meet the needs of employers, and organizational skill-building. Lastly, for communities and regions: supporting economic diversification, improving quality of place, and increased collaboration and regional focus.¹³⁴

The report evaluated 72 submitted ‘stories of change’ from POWER grant recipients and focused on the themes that ‘stakeholders’ valued the most. The highest-achieving metrics were the following: participants served and improved, students served and improved, jobs retained, businesses created and improved, workers/trainees served and improved, patients served and improved, and export sales revenues increased.¹³⁵ The report also includes the lowest-achieving metrics: internet speed, telecom sites, tourism numbers, organizations improved, households served, and households improved.¹³⁶ None of these metrics saw a target achievement of more than 37% and the internet speed improvement was by far the lowest, with 0% of the target goal achieved. Notable for the most successful implementations is the explicit mention of improving the individual and the progress it led to. Most alarming about the unsuccessful measures is the failure to meet the targeted number of households to be served and improved, which only met about a quarter of the projected target.

This seems to indicate that focusing so heavily on individual improvement does not necessarily lead to widespread community improvement. Additionally, these individual stories are only viewed as a success in relation to the economic needs of regional business owners. This

¹³⁴Chamberlain, Molly, and Nicole Dunn. 2021. 17.

¹³⁵Chamberlain, Molly, and Nicole Dunn. 2021. 7.

¹³⁶Ibid. 7.

is highlighted explicitly in relation to workforce development plans, as the overall goal of these plans is to create workers that are trained to meet the economic needs of current and future businesses that are adherent to the ARC's strategic investment goals. The metrics that achieved the highest level of success are indicative of the ARC's focus on individual improvement through the market. The eight highest achieving metrics (participants served, students served, jobs retained, businesses created, workers/trainees served, patients served, and export sales revenues increased) all relate to some form of market-based improvement by the ARC's pre-existing standards. All of these achieved over 100% of the target goal.¹³⁷ This is distinguished from the lowest achieving metrics which relate more closely to overall community improvement. Based on this data then, it appears that the ARC has had a fair amount of success in 'improving' the individual in relation to what businesses need, however this has not led to an overall improvement in the larger communities, especially when considering the failure to meet the desired target of households improved.

It is not that the report provided by Chamberlin and Dunn demonstrates a comprehensive failure on the part of the ARC, but instead indicates that by focusing so heavily on individual success, they fail to consider how this abstract improvement of the individual does not actually lead to an overall improvement in the community. For the commission, success can only be measured within the confines of the current capitalist market mechanisms of growth and accumulation, however it needs to be acknowledged that this does not indicate overall success for the working classes of the region, especially if they are not small business owners or do not have the time or capacity to participate in the workforce development programs. For the *individual*, self-development through job training and recovery from substance abuse is an

¹³⁷Chamberlin, Molly, Nicole Dunn. 2021. iii.

explicit demonstration of the individualistic self-development discussed by Freedden. For businesses and organizations, *progress* is measured by the ability to develop a workforce that can meet the needs of an employer and increase the profitability of businesses and entrepreneurs. Community and regional success is measured by diversification and support of individual *entrepreneurs*, specifically in the tourism sector.¹³⁸

In terms of the designation of funding, the ARC will only support projects and organizations that work from their same ideological framework and share the ARC's guiding mission, which is to 'innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia'.¹³⁹ Instead of considering the ARC as one organization that simply enacts economic development on the entire region, it is more helpful to conceptualize it as the leader of a larger network of subsidiaries that are all guided by the same understanding of economic development. While the development can be carried out in a variety of ways, the end goal for all the various NGOs, non-profits, and regional authorities is informed by the same overarching framework. Adherence to this framework means not deviating from the decontested terms of liberalism and this ultimately constrains the ways regional organizations can work towards economic development.

Perhaps most noticeable in the plans is the lack of policies related to a redistribution of wealth or more progressive policies outside of the market in general. This aversion to more redistributive and progressive policies, as described by Freedden, demonstrates liberals' understanding of freedom as the 'freedom from' something; specifically, freedom from the imposition of external preferences.¹⁴⁰ Thus, external preferences in the liberal lexicon translate to

¹³⁸Chamberlin, Molly, and Nicole Dunn. 2021. 17.

¹³⁹Appalachian Regional Commission. "Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity: ARC Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022-2026." ARC, October 2021. 9.

¹⁴⁰Freedden, Michael. 1996. 234.

a perceived overreach by the government, and highlights why liberals reject large scale state welfare policies, as they view them as an explicit imposition of these so-called external preferences.

The critiques I level against the (neo)liberal development model are informed by Marxian political economy and historical materialist frameworks, but if the liberal developmentalist was to read these, they would retort with: “So what?” The Marxist-informed shortcomings of the liberal developmental model are in fact positive attributes for the liberals and neoliberals. Their ideal economic model is one based on individual participation in the market and a ‘top-down’ implementation that is representative of elitist ideology which is inherently exclusionary of working class input. Whyte’s discussion of the early neoliberals offers a helpful framework for understanding how the liberal developmentalists view the function of the market:

Just as dignity was originally a term of moral standing, the neoliberals believed that only the self-reliant and responsible could lead dignified lives. Seeking welfare from the state, from this perspective, was inherently undignified. For the neoliberals, dignity required a competitive order in which individuals were responsible for their own fates.¹⁴¹

This further highlights the liberal rejection of welfare, as it infringes on the ability of a market to be competitive. The inevitable result of this focus on the competitiveness of the individual in the market creates and reproduces inequality, as it largely ignores the variety of material conditions of each individual trying to achieve self-development.

For the liberals, although they assert that economic improvement is the desired goal, the material realities of their implemented policies indicate that the actual outcome is economic exclusion of the most marginalized populations and widespread inequality.¹⁴² From the liberals’

¹⁴¹Whyte, Jessica. 2019. 29.

¹⁴²This inequality is especially visible in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There is a significant rural/urban divide in terms of median income, specifically when Southwestern Virginia is compared to Northern and Eastern Virginia. The six most southwestern counties (Buchanan, Scott, Lee, Wise, Dickenson, and Russell counties) all have a median household income of less

point of view these unequal outcomes are not demonstrative of failings of their market models, but they instead believe that these are *natural* outcomes and necessary functions of the capitalist market: “For defenders of economic liberalism the concern is not with equitable wealth distribution but rather the aim is maximal economic growth.”¹⁴³ Maximum growth has been the historic goal of the liberals and later the neoliberals, and this tradition is carried on by the ARC through their strategic investment goals and reliance on models of workforce development. This is because the outcomes are predicated on individual action, and for the liberal, the individual takes precedence over the larger society.

Clearly, an economy must achieve a certain level of growth in order to sustain itself, but the methods through which growth is achieved in the liberal model only create growth for a few. The growth and later decline of the coal industry throughout the 20th century in Appalachia directly resulted in the substantial impoverishment visible today and was the reason for the ARC even being created in the first place. I have demonstrated that the ARC relies on these same understandings of the individual, as the majority of the POWER initiative proposals rely on improvement of the individual by way of integration into the market in some form. Nevertheless, as discussed in the Chamberlin and Dunn summary, the ARC’s reliance on the improvement of the individual has failed to materialize in overall community economic improvement and development as the statistics in footnote 143 show. Additionally, the liberal model relies on divisions, whether they be a division between Nature and Society or division of labor between

than \$40,000. It is also not a coincidence that several of these counties historically relied on coal mining for employment and as a result have been hardest hit by the decline of the industry. Comparatively, these counties’ median income is shockingly low compared to their northern counterparts of Loudon, Falls Church, Arlington, and Fairfax counties, which all have a median income well above \$100,000. (“Virginia Income and Poverty.” Equity at a Glance. Virginia Department of Health , April 28, 2021. [https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/equity-at-a-glance/virginia/income-and-poverty/.](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/equity-at-a-glance/virginia/income-and-poverty/))

¹⁴³Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 50.

paid and unpaid labor. Once again though, these divisions are accepted as natural outcomes for the neoliberals, as they are what drive accumulation of profit and capital in the market. The Marxian framework offers insight into these divisions and clearly highlights the failings of liberalism as the next section shows.

v. A Marxist Response to the Neoliberals

I approach this project from a normative Marxist framework as I have discussed throughout, but here I want to develop a brief response to the neoliberals' naturalization of economic inequality their policies create through a Marxian framework. As I have shown, capitalism relies on a structuring of society that creates binaries between Society and Nature as well as divisions of labor, specifically between valued and unvalued labor. The current production model of capitalism is predicated on production for exchange-value on the market instead of production for use-value, and the ultimate goal is accumulation by way of appropriation and exploitation. This mode of production is what reinforces and maintains the divisions in society, and ignores the individual's place in the larger society, and simultaneously how she is shaped by this same society:

Man is in the most literal sense of the world a *zoon politikon* [political animal], not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. Production by isolated individuals outside of society—something which might happen as an exception to a civilized man who by accident got into the wilderness and already dynamically possessed within himself the forces of society—is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx. 1998. *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy*. Great Books in Philosophy. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books. 2.

Here, Marx is clearly demonstrating his historical materialist method, by showing how the individual cannot exist in isolation as strictly an individual, but only comes to realize herself through her relation *with other individuals in a society*. From this, it seems apparent that to lift the individual up as the sole component of production, as the liberal economists do, is incorrect because it ignores the interconnectedness of all individuals within the larger socioeconomic organization of a society.

To return to the neoliberals discussed in the previous section, their understanding of the individual as the most important component of society disregards the overarching structure and organization of a society. It fails to account for the beneficial aspects of the historical materialist theory where the individual can only be conceptualized in a relationship to other individuals, and is simultaneously shaped by the already-existing structures of the society. For example, in the case of Central Appalachia during the height of the coal industry, the industry constituted the primary organizational component of socioeconomic life, especially in the so-called ‘coal camps’ in places like Yellow Creek Tennessee discussed by Gaventa.¹⁴⁵ To posit the individual as *only an economic utility-maximizing subject* denies them any autonomy and limits what their lived experience in the world can even be.

Returning to Freeden, viewing the individual as *homo economicus* constrains the horizons of how they can achieve self-realization, meaning it can only be achieved in the realm of the market and the methods of attaining this achievement are also constrained by the liberal ideology. I counter the liberals’ point with the following excerpt from Marx’s chapters on primitive accumulation and the ‘freedom’ the market created:

The economic structure of capitalist society has grown out of the economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former. The immediate producer, the worker, could dispose of his own person only after he had ceased to

¹⁴⁵Gaventa, John. 1982.

be bound to the soil, and ceased to be the slave of another person. To become a free seller of labor-power, who carries his commodity wherever he can find a market for it, he must further have escaped from the regime of the guilds, their rules for apprentices and journeymen, and their restrictive labor regulations. *Hence the historical movement which changes the producers into wage-laborers appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and it is this aspect of the movement which alone exists from our bourgeois historians.* But on the other hand, these newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been *robbed of their own means of production*, and all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And this history, the history of their *expropriation*, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.¹⁴⁶

In the creation of a free market society by way of primitive accumulation, from its earliest manifestations in the English countryside in the 15th century, to the early Appalachian subsistence farmers' expropriation from their land by the coal companies, the history of capitalist free markets is one of an explicit reduction in the freedom to achieve self-determination and self-realization, despite the countless liberal and neoliberal theorists who assert otherwise. Market logic has resulted in a rationalization and naturalization of the inherent violence of the market and is able to accredit its systemic failings to an *individual's* personal failings. To be free in the market means to have the freedom to be exploited by the owner of the means of production, it is the freedom to consume a product produced by other 'free' individuals, and it is the freedom to sell one's own aptitudes and capacities to others on the market for a wage.

Liberals and neoliberals view this as the true achievement of freedom and economic efficiency, and would not view my description as a negative one. This historical logic has resulted in the creation of organizations like the ARC who predicate their entire existence and mission on working within and through the market to help individuals achieve this same understanding of freedom. Of course, the ARC is not an isolated case, but rather provides a small-scale example of how the liberal economic ideology functions in practice. As Marx writes,

¹⁴⁶Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital Volume 1*. Vol. 1. 3 vols. London: Penguin Classics. 875. [italics my own]

“The starting-point of the development that gave rise both to the wage-laborer and to the capitalist was the enslavement of the worker. The advance made consisted in a change in the form of this servitude, in the transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation.”¹⁴⁷

For the liberals and neoliberals, to be a human means to be a worker and willing participant in the free market, and only then will an individual be a valued member of society.

vi. Networks of Liberalism

Based on this analysis, it seems clear that the ARC is explicitly liberal both in ideology and practice. It is important to note as well that the ARC is only one part of a much larger network of like-minded organizations, businesses, and individuals that provide the acceptable framework of economic development for Appalachia. The focus of my thesis is on Central Appalachia so I have tried to pay special attention to plans enacted in these states, however, based on the documents that summarize the POWER awards, it is apparent that all thirteen states of the region are subjected to the same types of plans.

Central Appalachia is one of the most impoverished regions in the country. Historically it had a relatively strong economy because of coal mining, but today coal jobs account for only a fraction of overall employment. It seems clear that the ARC should function as an organ that enacts equitable policy that would materially benefit the most individuals in the region as possible, but instead the region has seen a consistent pattern of plans that are informed by the same logic and have only offered marginally positive results in comparison to the scale of need. Their plans follow a linear trajectory: work to create economic *liberty* for the *individual* to achieve self-development and this will create regional *progress*. While there is an insistent focus

¹⁴⁷Marx, Karl. 1990. 875.

on 'workforce development' it is not beneficial when these are seasonal jobs like those for the ecotourism industry or scarce and low-paying jobs in the small business sector. The ARC is greatly restricted by its fidelity to the liberal economic development model which means that the community does not see their daily material conditions drastically change. Instead, funds are provided to organizations and individuals who share the same vision of economic development as the ARC, and then every five years a new strategic plan is released that is informed by the same logic as the previous ones, and the cycle continues.

Chapter 4: Towards Post-Coal Futures

i. Moving Beyond Liberal Ideology

Thus far, I have demonstrated the overall inadequacies of liberal economic development as deployed by the ARC. In the final chapter, I suggest how Appalachia can move beyond liberalism and strive to achieve a genuine form of environmental and economic justice. No amount of liberal-minded reform can alter the underlying foundations of liberalism because of its fidelity to the political economic structure of capitalism, where the primary goal is both growth and maintenance of the market. The adherence to the structure of capitalism is an explicitly material relationship and ought to be challenged as such. It is not enough to change the ideology or create new political subjects, but the challenge itself must be a dialectical process, namely, one that arises out of the class struggle between the owners of the means of production and the workers. History is driven forward explicitly by dialectical processes of class struggle, and this is a route that Central Appalachia knows well. The ideological norms that constitute a given society are the direct outcome of material relations of production, and within this mode of production, individuals are socialized in a particular way that reinforces the ideology most beneficial to the owners of the means of production. Engels demonstrates the importance of the relations of production and their impact on creating an accompanying ideology that is advantageous to the bourgeoisie,

To make the earth an object of huckstering—the earth, which is our one and all, the first condition of our existence—was the last step toward making oneself an object of huckstering. It was and is to this very day an immorality surpassed only by the immorality of self-alienation. And the original appropriation—the monopolization of the earth by a few, the exclusion of the

rest from that which is the condition of their life—yields nothing in immorality to the subsequent huckstering earth.¹⁴⁸

This ‘making the earth an object’ is performed by way of enclosures and the creation of the commons as private property, the necessary structural change that allows for capitalism to emerge as the dominant mode of production. Here, Engels shows that the material foundations of production which make the earth an object of commodification subsequently leads to the alienation of the worker, and making oneself an object whose sole purpose is to sell labor to the owners. Thus, the process of overcoming alienation starts first and foremost with the worker overcoming her alienation from the material world around her.

I have shown why liberalism rejects more radical policies, such as guaranteed income or abolition of private property, but it is important to at least consider what policies such as these would look like in practice and their feasibility. I assert that to remedy the economic and ecological ills of the region, the ‘status quo’ and material foundations of liberal capitalism should be challenged by the workers themselves. Additionally, solutions must be sought *outside* of already existing state mechanisms, because by now it is clear that incrementalist reform has been largely inadequate for meeting the material needs of the region. Obviously, this is much easier said than done, but through Stump, Daggett, Smith, Foster and Scott, I explore other possibilities of economic and political futures for the region beyond workforce development and ecotourism plans.

According to Stump, who discusses alternative visions of environmental governance, one potential solution can be found in the theoretical approaches of ecofeminism, which

advocate[s] for degrowth-steeped formations that are based on strongly ecologically sustainable systems, such as solidarity economy—and subsistence-based modes, that are

¹⁴⁸Foster, John Bellamy. 2000. 106. Citing, Friedrich Engels, “Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy,” in Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 210.

focused on production for use value rather than exchange value in the market. This approach also demands interlinking such local-and regional-centered re-formations with broader national and global efforts (i.e., as involves an ecosocialist-steeped approach).¹⁴⁹

The ecofeminist theorists understand problems of capitalist-induced ecological and economic subjugation through an intersectional lens, and take into consideration questions of class, race, gender, and ‘Global South-North’ divisions and how ‘hegemonic liberal capitalist forces’ reinforce these divisions along lines of identity.¹⁵⁰ To challenge this hegemonic force, activists, scholars, and working class citizens must challenge the actual *material structures* that inform the capitalist-induced divisions and Stump reiterates that this can be achieved through a theoretically-informed praxis:

This involves eschewing traditional environmental law practice in favor of robust praxis—which is a practice that is theoretically-informed and committed to manifesting where that theory leads. Thus, beyond liberal law reform, this praxis focuses on truly foundational constitutive re-formations that address the underlying logic of dominating systems and underlying system dynamics.¹⁵¹

It is important to note here, that Stump is not calling for ‘reform’ but rather a hyphenated version of the word which indicates not restructuring the already existing system, but instead *re-creating* it through this theoretically-informed praxis and challenging the hegemonic structures of production and their logics. This challenge starts in contesting notions of growth as the ultimate solution to economic and ecological problems in favor of *degrowth*, which necessitates a transition to an economy of production for use-value as opposed to one premised on exchange-value. In practice, a degrowth economy “focus[es] on redistributing existing income, shortening the working week, and introducing a job guarantee and a living wage, while expanding access to

¹⁴⁹Stump, Nicholas. F. 2021. 162.

¹⁵⁰Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 162-3.

¹⁵¹Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 163-4.

public goods.”¹⁵² Degrowth does not necessarily mean a restriction on individuals to achieve a proper standard of living, but instead a reduction of ‘throughput’ from developed nations to reduce energy demands while still ensuring individuals can achieve the ‘good life’.¹⁵³

As my normative discussion in the first chapter demonstrated, capitalism is a way of organizing Society and Nature that is premised on growth, and it constantly seeks out new zones of appropriation for use-value inputs. This is an unsustainable model of social and economic organization as the case of Central Appalachia has shown. However, challenges to the current growth-centric model require an understanding of economic production that lies outside the logic of liberal capitalism. Essentially, there cannot be a degrowth approach that still works within the same system that has perpetuated ecological and environmental harm and “if degrowth measures were attempted, for instance, vis-a-vis top-down policy implementation from within the liberal capitalist paradigm, the potential for economic and social breakdown is exceedingly great.”¹⁵⁴ Radical systemic change cannot come through the mechanisms of the liberal state, as it has historically proven to be inadequately equipped to mitigate economic and ecological exploitation. A key component of this change will be moving beyond current liberal notions of growth and progress which typically equates the two with a rising GDP.¹⁵⁵ To move beyond the GDP-centric model would require an inversion of the usual political logic of growth, which economists and policymakers substitute for equality.¹⁵⁶ Redistribution of wealth within the current system is unimaginable for most liberal policymakers, but to ensure that there is both

¹⁵²Hickel, Jason (2019) “Degrowth: a theory of radical abundance”, real-world economics review, issue no. 87, 19 March, pp. 54-68,
<http://www.paecon.net/PAEReview/issue87/Hickel87.pdf>

¹⁵³Hickel, Jason. 2019. 54.

¹⁵⁴Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 165.

¹⁵⁵Hickel, Jason. 2019. 57.

¹⁵⁶Hickel, Jason. 2019. 57.

economic and environmental justice, some form of redistribution will need to be implemented. With an explicitly redistributive model and a political structure that relies on working class citizen input and decision-making, the ARC could become a beneficial body for the region and assist in creating an environment where Appalachians can achieve a true form of economic development that is not solely reliant on creating new wage laborers and expanding the capitalist market, and further commodifying and privatizing land.

Although Stump's framework is helpful for conceptualizing solutions outside of the current political order, it does not go far enough and runs the risk of being brought back within the realm of capitalist production. To go a step further, no amount of reform and political restructuring is truly liberating unless it is driven by the class struggle and directly challenges the current mode of economic organization. Essentially, this is the starting point for the creation of a new society and any ideological restructuring and reform is useless without an emphasis on class struggle.

These alternative visions of society must also consider how work is understood, particularly what work is valued and what work is not. As demonstrated in the ARC's plans, valuable work is that which is waged and takes place within market structures. Daggett conceptualizes an alternative vision of work that draws on the theories of political 'post-work' movements, which

would challenge the unquestioned assertion that modernization and high-technology society can be trusted to produce widespread well-being. Instead, they [post-work adherents] offer an alternative vision of society that decouples energy from work, and productivism from equality and well-being.¹⁵⁷

Climate change has resulted in an urgent need to begin conceptualizing new modes of living and these 'alternative visions of society'; however, it remains to be seen how these can be

¹⁵⁷Daggett, Cara. 2019. 191.

implemented. One potential route is through the aforementioned theoretically-informed praxis discussed by Stump. This praxis rejects the capitalist growth-centric model and instead focuses on creating a more just and sustainable economic structure that reevaluates the relationship between Society and Nature. This theoretically-informed perspective could rely on conceptions of degrowth that center on redistribution and a more democratic political structure.

These are obviously significant assertions, and systemic structural change will not occur overnight, but activists, scholars, and working-class citizens should consider how to adopt this materialist framework if they wish to mount a challenge to the forces of capital and liberal purveyors of the status quo. Adopting an ideological framework by itself is meaningless if it is not informed by an understanding of the material relations of production, as this is what informs the ideology. One example of the inadequacies of state mechanisms for achieving systemic change can be found in debates on transitioning to renewable forms of energy and divesting from fossil fuels. This is particularly observable in Appalachia, where coalfield activist organizations are trying to create the infrastructure for renewable energy, mainly solar, and to justify the positive impact renewables would have, they are forced to demonstrate the benefits by asserting that it would create jobs. As Daggett notes,

...in most energy debates, environmentalists are compelled either to prove that alternative fuels would create more jobs and/or more economic growth than existing fossil fuel systems or, if this is not possible, to prove that the waste associated with fossil fuels outweighs the benefit of fossil fuel jobs.¹⁵⁸

Activists understand that the overarching goal of transitioning to renewables is to mitigate the harms of fossil fuel production and consumption, but because of the dominance of liberal ideology, they must prove that renewables are also economically desirable and must present the benefits through an economic ‘cost-benefit’ framework. They essentially must show that the

¹⁵⁸Daggett, Cara 2019. 191.

growth-centric economic model of capitalism will not be drastically disrupted and that these new forms of energy will ensure a similar form of production that will continue to accumulate profit and rely on waged work.

Alternatively, arguments *against* renewable energy rely on this same job-centric approach, particularly in coal country, often through a rhetorical strategy of the ‘hypocrite’s trap’: “The hypocrite’s trap is an ideological device that attempts to ensnare those advocates existing within a neoliberal system but who do not comprehend or value neoliberal market rationality as the sole means of decision making.”¹⁵⁹ This so-called trap is not only applicable in the realm of fossil fuels though, and is often employed by all defenders of the free market as a rhetorical method to discredit critics of capitalism. It undermines the ‘moral authority’ of activists and “draws on a realist rhetorical style both to challenge the divestment movement’s occupation of the moral high ground and to offer a seemingly self-evident way of understanding the reality of energy economics.”¹⁶⁰ It simultaneously discredits critics of the status-quo and paints them as naive, while trying to strengthen the ideological hegemony of liberal free markets through an assertion of the primacy of liberal rationality. There are three main components of the hypocrite’s trap: establishing ignorance, exposing complicity, and shaming hypocrisy.¹⁶¹ In the context of fossil fuel divestment, this means that companies and their supporters attack activists and critics by trying to discredit their criticism and maintain that they are ‘idealist’ or even ‘anti-poor’. Companies and their supporters promote the idea that fossil fuel consumption and continual economic growth are keys to lifting individuals out of poverty, so therefore activists are trying to deny the achievement of the ‘good life’ to the global poor. The free market

¹⁵⁹Schneider, et., al. 2016. 108.

¹⁶⁰Schneider, et., al. 2016. 112.

¹⁶¹Ibid. 113.

ideologues maintain their understandings of the situation are steeped in a common sense rationality, and that any deviation from this violates the logic of the market and will only serve to hurt the most vulnerable populations, when in fact, these are the populations that are harmed the most by adherence to the growth-centric model of production. Therefore, when activists are confronted with a hypocrite's trap, they are forced to adapt and argue the benefits of change through the logic of the free market so that they can maintain their credibility and get wider citizen support for divestment.

However, activists are fighting a losing battle so long as they attempt to rationalize with the owning class. The bourgeoisie will accept only incremental reforms so long as it does not offer a legitimate challenge to their power. Thus, activists and working class citizens should strive at every turn to challenge this power and accept nothing less than the wholesale re-formation of the political and economic forces that govern society. More reform-minded critics would reject this assertion and say that it is unfeasible, and that activists must work within the given institutions to achieve change. However, as I've demonstrated, this has not worked in Central Appalachia as MTR mining continues along with the economic exploitation of its people.

The needed structural changes also rest on a reformulation and rejection of the previously discussed 'Cartesian binary' between Society and Nature. This is not the only dichotomy to overcome though, as ecofeminist theorists demonstrate,

The logic undergirding liberal capitalism is marked, most notably by normative dualisms such as men vs. women, society vs. nature, white vs. non-white, and reason vs. emotion. Unfortunately, under liberalism, the second component of such dualisms (women, nature, non-white) are disfavored and have thus long been 'othered' in order to facilitate, most fundamentally, maximum capital accumulation among elite interests.¹⁶²

¹⁶²Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 167.

Overcoming these binaries requires a theoretically-informed praxis that relies on solidaristic ways of being in the world and understanding human existence as intimately connected with larger ecological processes, as Nature is the means by which society is able to reproduce itself and maintain its productive capacities. These binaries are additionally reinforced by the self-alienation described by Engels, further demonstrating the material and ideological impacts of capitalist production. One potential solution offered by Stump is the so-called ‘solidarity economy’ model which relies on a community-based approach which “[is] most likely to satisfy [the] needs of diverse communities—as compared to top-down approaches involving homogenized liberal development aid.”¹⁶³ The ARC is exemplary of this homogenized mode of development. Appalachia encompasses thirteen states and over 400 counties, yet as the POWER initiative plans show, there is little consideration for the diversity of economic and social structures, and each of the states is subjected to a similar mode of development based on the previously discussed strategic investment goals. Additionally, the ARC model relies on top-down implementation, where they receive feedback from local organizations and businesses to determine what is needed for development. The process is certainly not a bottom-up democratic one, but instead relies on a centralized model enacted from the federal and state governments and is based on the economic needs of businesses. By adhering to a model that largely considers the needs of businesses, the ARC is creating a form of economic development for the capitalist class only and ends up largely ignoring the needs of the individuals employed by these business owners.

In relation to the workforce development models, there needs to be a re-forming of the understanding of work itself, particularly in relation to ‘productivism’ and as Daggett notes

¹⁶³Stump, Nicholas F. 2021. 171.

“There are other (scientific, political, spiritual) modes of knowing and experiencing energy that do not elevate productivity as the primary goal for human well-being. Rejecting productivism does not acquire rejecting technology or automation *tout court*.”¹⁶⁴ By insisting on an intertwining of productive work and energy production, the capitalist work ethic is left uncontested, and this work ethic “applies not only to human labor, but also to the fuels, technologies, and nonhumans put to work for humans.”¹⁶⁵ Productivity and growth are the accepted rationales of liberal economic development, but the view ignores the material finitude of the earth’s resources, as well as the effects continual economic expansion has on the physical world. The market is deified and becomes the only realm where societal and individual situations can be improved. This points to a sort of empiricist rationalism that is characteristic of the American liberal political economy, where solutions can only exist within current power structures and both problems and solutions are attributed to the individual,

Macroanalyses of energy are dominated by techno-rationality and market reform, both of which eschew normative claims. More political claims about energy, meanwhile, are often relegated to the micro-level, to personal habits of energy consumption and individual consumer choices: fly less, bike to work, install solar panels, buy an electric vehicle.¹⁶⁶

While Daggett is referring to understandings of energy politics, there are parallels to the view of work by development agencies. Poverty and its causes are mainly analyzed in the ‘micro’ realm, where its causes are attributed to individualized failings and choices and getting out of poverty is an individual responsibility as well. For the ARC, this does not only occur through workforce training, but through the development of a particular mindset as a POWER initiative plan implemented in 2021 in West Virginia demonstrates. Named “*WV Center for Nurse Entrepreneurship*” it will

¹⁶⁴Daggett, Cara. 2019. 195.

¹⁶⁵Daggett, Cara. 2019. 196.

¹⁶⁶Daggett, Cara. 2019. 198.

Create a physical space to foster entrepreneurial activities and increase economic opportunities for nurses, especially advanced practice nurses, who are qualified to provide direct health care services, including prescriptions and telehealth. The center will help expand the pilot project training curriculum, provide regional training for nurses to be successful entrepreneurs, and expand the online WV Nurses in Business Directory.¹⁶⁷

This particular plan stood out because it is geared towards individuals *already working* in arguably one of the most important jobs in a society.¹⁶⁸ Typically, the workforce development plans are geared towards those who recently became unemployed or are recovering from substance abuse disorders, so for a plan to be geared towards individuals who already have gainful employment is unique and has larger implications for what the ARC's underlying goals for the plans are. It additionally indicates that many sectors of the current workforce in Appalachia are underpaid and therefore must seek out supplementary employment as footnote 168 illustrates. The ARC attempts to create particular *subjects* through these plans who will adopt the free market-driven entrepreneurial mindset posed in the above plan. It is demonstrative of a specific framework in the ARC's plans that seems to assert that everyone can become a capitalist if they are given the chance, which is a direct reflection of the material organization of production impacting ideological influence. Work, then, is not something that is absolutely necessary for life, but rather a 'disciplinary apparatus' where particular political subjects are produced.¹⁶⁹ This is not to say that work is not important, because it is the means through which humans create and live in their environment, but rather is a critique of a specific form of work

¹⁶⁷Appalachian Regional Commission. 2021. "POWER 2021 Award Summaries by State." ARC. 19.

¹⁶⁸This plan highlights another aspect of the workforce in Appalachia, specifically in West Virginia. On average, West Virginia nurses get paid about 18% less than the national average, so when this is taken into consideration, it becomes clearer why the above plan was proposed. This is alarming and shows the difficulty of the situation in the Appalachian economy, especially for jobs such as nursing which are so important for a community. ("Registered Nurse Salary in West Virginia: Incredible Health." Registered Nurse Salary in West Virginia | Incredible Health. Incredible Health. Accessed April 10, 2022. <https://www.incrediblehealth.com/salaries/rn/wv.>)

¹⁶⁹Daggett, Cara. 2019. 198.

that prioritizes economic growth, increasing productivity, and accumulation of profit and capital.¹⁷⁰

However, any reconceptualization of work that still relies on the overarching structure of capitalism will ensure the continuance of exploitation. Capitalism as an economic system *needs* a proletariat that is underpaid and exploited through wage labor. Therefore, simply reducing hours worked while still upholding the larger structures of capitalist production will only provide marginal improvements and does nothing to advance the class struggle. Of course, struggles against unjust working conditions can be a starting point, but the working class should not be satisfied with incremental victories that leave current structures largely uncontested.

Capitalism is characterized by a series of crises, and these result in skewed economic development, but also create the conditions for restructuring: “Capitalism is always transforming space in its own image, but in periods of expansion this amounts to the filling in of patterns more or less set at an earlier period. Precisely during crisis are these new patterns set in an unprecedented restructuring of geographic space.”¹⁷¹ The coal industry is emblematic of these crises that result in restructuring, and the practice of mining is arguably one of the most significant examples of the restructuring of geographic space, especially now that MTR mining is the main method of extraction. Zones of appropriation and exploitation are representative of these restructurings, and, in times of crisis, capitalism seeks these new zones out so that it may continue its expansion into previously untapped Cheap Natures. According to Smith, there are possible remedies to uneven developmental restructuring in working class movements that

look for an end to the pattern of uneven development, a pattern and process which implies much more than it says. It is here that we connected directly with the political treatment of uneven development. It is not that our goal is some rigidly conceived ‘even

¹⁷⁰Daggett, Cara. 2019. 198.

¹⁷¹Smith, Neil. 2008. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. 3rd ed. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 208.

development'...Rather the goal is to create socially determined patterns of differentiation and equalization which are driven not by the logic of capital but by genuine social choice.¹⁷²

To achieve a genuine social choice means to create new possibilities for existing in the world and relations with Nature that adhere to a new logic, specifically one that is not solely driven by the desire for accumulation. To adhere to a new logic necessitates abolishing the current material organization of economic production and creating a new order, one that is not defined by private property and selling one's labor for an insufficient wage. To connect to the previously discussed authors, it requires a challenge of the historically developed material structures and subsequent ideologies of liberalism and capitalism that have created ongoing patterns of exploitation, not just in Appalachia, but all over the world.

While the focus of my thesis has been on the Appalachian Regional Commission, it provides a case study of what liberal capitalist economic development looks like in practice, and I hope that I have offered convincing reasons for why it must be wholly rejected. Climate change has by now been firmly established as one of humanity's primary concerns for the years to come, and it is not enough to seek out incrementalist reform of the current system that has created the crisis. Instead, new modes of living and producing must be created through a struggle that is led by the working classes, not by careerist developmentalists who adhere to historically-created dominant logics. Unequal holdings of private property, low wages, and reliance on fossil fuels have created a crisis in Appalachia, and it will be the job of the affected populations to create a new way of living from this crisis, one that considers the interconnectedness of Society and Nature, economic production systems, and social systems. A sustainable and just post-coal future is not one that still relies on integrating as many individuals as possible within the free market but is instead a future that rests on allowing each individual to achieve a true self-development

¹⁷²Smith, Neil. 2008. 211.

and self-realization *outside* of the market by way of class struggle. Only through class struggle and a theoretically-informed praxis can economic and ecological justice be achieved.

Chapter 5: Final Remarks

i. Limitations of Project

The main limitation of my project is the relatively small amount of empirical data I provide. I based my empirical findings on only six ARC documents, and although more could have been used, I felt that the chosen documents best exemplified the ARC's methodological and ideological approaches to development. These documents are also very recent (the earliest was published in 2015), so some critics might assert that it is unfair to develop my critiques based on such a small period of time. Another possible limitation is that I have only focused on the failures of the ARC and portray the organization as purely a failure that has offered no improvement. Although in many instances the ARC is in fact a failure, there have been a few positive outcomes, and since 1965 poverty has been reduced in the region, but my critique rests on the assertion that it is simply not enough. This is especially true in relation to the ecological harm caused by coal mining, which should be a key focus of policy prescriptions because it has and will continue to have negative health effects on the citizens of Central Appalachia for the years to come. Coal mining continues in Central Appalachia, but it is in rapid decline and as the US continues to move away from coal and fossil fuels, new solutions are needed that are formulated outside of the confines of liberal economic development.

ii. Directions for Future Research

While I am writing about the case of Central Appalachia, it is only one example of a place that has been subjected to a liberal model of development. The solutions offered by the ARC are informed by (neo)liberal ideology, which has been deployed throughout much of the world by a whole host of nonprofit organizations and NGOs such as the World Bank and IMF.

For future research, I want to broaden my scope of analysis, and compare the case of Central Appalachia and the ARC to a country in the developing world that has experienced the detrimental effects of extractive industries and subsequent plans for liberal economic development. Liberal capitalism is a global project, and no matter the location, the general outcomes are the same, although in the developing world the level of exploitation tends to be much higher. Liberalism's projects are reliant on appeasing the will of capitalists and integrating the poorest individuals of a society into the workforce and creating a particular kind of political and economic citizen through this integration. As I go forward with my research, it would be beneficial to the larger body of scholarship to integrate my analysis of the ARC into a broader analysis of the global project of liberal economic development and find similarities and differences between Central Appalachia and economically similar regions in the developing world. This future project would benefit greatly from extensive fieldwork and interviews to determine how individuals who participated in the ARC workforce development plans have been positively or negatively impacted. Overall, my project has attempted to demonstrate the failures of liberalism as a mode of political and economic governance, but I hope the evidence and analysis I provided has demonstrated why it is insufficient for the working classes of Appalachia and going forward I want to demonstrate why it is insufficient for the world's working classes.

Bibliography

- About Joe*. About | U.S. Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.manchin.senate.gov/about>
- Appalachian Regional Commission. “Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity: ARC Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022-2026.” ARC, October 2021.
- Appalachian Regional Commission. (2020, August 25). *ARC's history and work in Appalachia*. Appalachian Regional Commission. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-history-and-work-in-appalachia/>
- Appalachian Regional Commission. (2022, January 3). *ARC's structure and leadership*. Appalachian Regional Commission. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-structure-and-leadership/>
- Appalachian Regional Commission. (2022, January 7). *Federal co-chair Gayle Conelly manchin*. Appalachian Regional Commission. Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.arc.gov/staff/federal-co-chair-gayle-conelly-manchin/>
- Appalachian Regional Commission. “Investing in Appalachia’s Future: The Appalachian Regional Commission’s Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia’s Opportunities. 2016-2020.” ARC, November 2015.
- Appalachian Regional Commission. “Kentucky Promise Zone Downtown Revitalization Project.” ARC, January 2021.
- Appalachian Regional Commission. “POWER Award Summaries by State as of December 2021.” ARC, December 2021.
- Appalachian Regional Commission. “POWER Award Summaries by State: As of October 2020.” ARC, October 2020.
- Bell, Shannon. *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016.
- Boettner , Todd. “Who Owns West Virginia in the 21st Century?” West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy. West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy , November 20, 2017. <https://wvpolicy.org/who-owns-west-virginia-in-the-21st-century-2/>.
- Catte, Elizabeth. *What You Are Getting Wrong about Appalachia*. First edition. Cleveland, Ohio: Belt Publishing, 2018.
- Chamberlin, Molly, and Nicole Dunn. “POWER Initiative Evaluation: The POWER of Change. Stories of Results for Individuals, Businesses, and Communities.” ARC in Association with Chamberlin and Dunn LLC, September 2021.

- Daggett, Cara New. *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work*. Elements. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Engels, Friedrich, “Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy,” in Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964)
- Foster, John Bellamy. *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 2000.
- Foster, John Bellamy. “Marx’s Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology.” *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 2 (1999): 366–405. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210315>.
- Freeden, Michael. *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*. 1. issued in paperback. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Gaventa, John. *Power and Powerlessness. Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Pr, 1982.
- Gramsci, Antonio, and David Forgacs. *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Hickel, Jason (2019) “Degrowth: a theory of radical abundance”, real-world economics review, issue no. 87, 19 March, pp. 54-68, <http://www.paecon.net/PAERReview/issue87/Hickel87.pdf>
- Joe Manchin III. National Governors Association. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2022, from <https://www.nga.org/governor/joe-manchin-iii-2/>
- Levine, David P, and S. Abu Turab Rizvi. *Poverty, Work and Freedom: Political Economy and the Moral Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Marley, Benjamin J. “The Coal Crisis in Appalachia: Agrarian Transformation, Commodity Frontiers and the Geographies of Capital: The Coal Crisis in Appalachia.” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16, no. 2 (April 2016): 225–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12104>.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume 1*. Vol. 1. 3 vols. London: Penguin Classics, 1990.
- Marx, Karl. (1863–65). *Capital, vol. 3*. New York: Vintage. 1963.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy*. Great Books in Philosophy. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1998.

- Marx, Karl, and Martin Milligan. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Great Books in Philosophy Series. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1988.
- Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. 1st Edition. New York: Verso, 2015.
- “Mountaintop Removal 101.” Appalachian Voices, 2015. <https://appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/mtr101/>.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001.
- “Poverty Guidelines.” ASPE. Accessed September 2, 2021. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>.
- Pulido, Lauren, Ellen Kohl, and Nicole-Marie Cotton. “State Regulation and Environmental Justice: The Need for Strategy Reassessment.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27, no. 2 (March 4, 2016): 12–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2016.1146782>.
- “Registered Nurse Salary in West Virginia: Incredible Health.” Registered Nurse Salary in West Virginia | Incredible Health. Incredible Health. Accessed April 10, 2022. <https://www.incrediblehealth.com/salaries/rn/wv>.
- Schneider, Jen, Peter K. Bsumek, Jennifer Peeples, and Steve Schwarze. *Under Pressure: Coal Industry Rhetoric and Neoliberalism*. 1st ed. 2016. Palgrave Studies in Media and Environmental Communication. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53315-9>.
- Scott, Rebecca R. *Removing Mountains: Extracting Nature and Identity in the Appalachian Coalfields*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. 3rd ed. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008.
- Stoll, Steven. *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*. First edition. New York: Hill and Wang, A Division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.
- Stump, Nicholas F. *Remaking Appalachia: Ecosocialism, Ecofeminism, and Law*. First edition. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2021.
- Tzouvala, Ntina. *Capitalism as Civilisation: A History of International Law*. Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

“Virginia Income and Poverty.” Equity at a Glance. Virginia Department of Health , April 28, 2021. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/equity-at-a-glance/virginia/income-and-poverty/>.