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The decline of Coal, structural power, memory, and future choices in the Jiu Valley and Central Appalachia[1]

David A. KIDECKEL[2]

Taking our points of departure from Pierre Nora's notion of "lieux de mémoire" and Daphne Berdahl's concept of "hegemonic and oppositional nostalgia," we consider why, in Appalachia, coal memories and nostalgia takes remarkably contrasting and contestory forms, both denigrating and lauding the declining coal economy and its institutions, compared to the generally homogenous qualities of coal memories in the Jiu Valley that typically laud the past while expressing extreme repugnance toward the present. Further we consider the different ways by which memories of coal are concretized in the diverse sites and places where coal's past is depicted and defined. In particular we show how the nature of memory sites in the two regions, such as museums, monuments, and public art, support and intensify the particular forms of nostalgia concerning coal's past.

Key-words: *coal history, memory, uidentity, structural power*

1. Introduction: My background in Romania, Appalachia, and coal

Good afternoon. I want to thank the organizers for the opportunity to keynote this unique conference. Considering the participants and their collective knowledge about Appalachia and the Carpathians, my talk might be tantamount to "bringing coals to Newcastle." Still, I look forward to sharing our thoughts about the challenging future for people in these two regions. As some may know, I have researched in Romania since the mid-1970s when, soon after I began graduate school at the University of Massachusetts, I joined a group studying socialist Transylvania, organized by Prof John Cole. Our group was interested in how people in different regions adapted to the socialist system. Reflecting that broad theme,

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[2] Central Connecticut State University, dakideckel@gmail.com

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my doctoral research concerned the influence of local history and socio-economic organization on community responses to collective farm regulations.

In Hîrseni commune, where I lived for 18 months, many people worked both for the collective and in Făgăraș chemical factories (Kideckel 1993). Consequently, farm decision making was influenced by the unpredictable labor force. After the 1989 revolution, as socialism came undone, I began to focus on the changing lives of industrial workers. On the Black Sea coast in the mid-1990s, soon after the infamous Bucharest invasions by the Jiu Valley miners, the so-called *mineriade*, I met two vacationing miners. When I asked about the *mineriade* they claimed great differences from press reports and invited me to the Valley to see for myself. I began work there in mid-1999, culminating in my book "Getting by in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working Class Culture" comparing the physical and socio-emotional responses of Făgăraș chemical workers and Jiu Valley miners to the on-going changes.

In 2015 I renewed my concern for coal mining when the rebranded Jiu Valley coal company, the Complexul Energetic Hunedoara, and Arch Coal and Alpha Natural Resources in the US near-simultaneously declared insolvency and bankruptcy. My relationship with Appalachia began at that time. One evening at the Coal River Mountain Watch organization in Raleigh County, West Virginia I was speaking with one young man from the Mountain Justice organization. He said his former professor, Theresa Burriss, was interested in the Carpathians. Some weeks later Theresa and I connected, and the rest is history.

2. Challenging stereotypes of Mountain Folk, coal miners, and coal mining

Donald Davis's 2015 conference address (Davis 2016) established numerous social and natural historical connections between the Appalachia and Carpathia. But this essay concerns another important theme in the history of the regions, namely variation in the formation and organization of mountain and coal mining identities, and the kinds of choices mining communities will make about their futures beyond coal. As I will argue, regional identity is constructed from a variety of influences including geography, demography, and gender. However, the history, particularities, and structure of regional power relations in the Jiu Valley and Appalachia, one state-based, the other private, especially shape regional conditions. As coal declines, state support in the Jiu Valley appears to protect citizens from some of the worst results of the changing economy. However, in Appalachia, community conditions are particularly dire and precarious as the privately-operated coal economy deteriorates. Perhaps, because of this variation,

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Appalachians struggle in resistance while people in the Jiu Valley are often quiescent and disengaged.

Though coal production is rapidly declining in both regions, coal mining still occupies significant economic and cultural space and retains importance in regional identities and mythic traditions. However, others from outside the regions stereotype mining and mountain folk regarding those same identities and beliefs. Such stereotypes of mountains and miners play havoc with social analysis. Mountain people are often thought backward by lowland peers, who often conquer and control them, like lowland Turk and upland Serb in the Balkans (Judah 1997), lowland Spaniard and upland Quechua and Aymara in the Andes (Wernke 2013), and lowland Pathan and upland Gujar in the Hindukush of north Pakistan (Barth 1956). Lowland power often restricts upland lives. Compared to nearby lowland zones, both the Carpathians and Appalachians are less developed and exhibit more problematic social features like greater morbidity and greater rates of out-migration. However, these similarities result from dissimilar forces. The Carpathians are an ethnic shatter-zone, where majority-minority relations often colored history (Hann 2009), though the Jiu Valley is, in fact, an exception (Kideckel 2007). The Appalachian problematic is less an ethnic one. That population is more diverse than many believe (Catte 2018), but absentee ownership of key regional resources has deprived the region of much of its capital and self-worth.

Mountain miners, meanwhile, are doubly marginalized by both geography and labor, reinforcing myths of backwardness and low intellect. One joke alleges the limitations of coal miners, suggesting they are confused when “shown a row of shovels and told to take their pick.” Miners are applauded everywhere for clever self-sufficiency, but this is twinned with beliefs of animalistic, pack-like commitments to their work mates. Miner families are thought stalwart but wanton, and their spouses long-suffering but promiscuous. Today coal regions are often essentialized as zones of diverse pathologies, while the essential qualities of regional people and culture are overlooked or disparaged. Most critically, all this symbolic marginalization ignores variation, furthers real-life political economic degradation, and enhances local senses of alienation.

Coal mining is a regional commonality, but industrial practice varies extensively within and between the regions. Carpathian coal, mainly mined underground and combusted for heat and electricity, ranges from high-quality to mid-grade bituminous ores, such as in the Jiu Valley (Buia et al. 2013), to brown highly polluting lignite. In the Valley the quality of coal, and productivity of seams declines east to west. Until World War I Jiu Valley mines were typically run by consortia of entrepreneurial organizations and small family corporations (Baron 1998). Appalachian coal includes high-grade anthracite used in steel manufacture,

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and exported worldwide for this purpose, with considerable deposits of diverse bituminous stocks, such as in southern West Virginia (West Virginia Coal Association 2015). Until the 1920s Appalachian mines were chiefly small operations, with mine work organized almost as craft (Simon 1981). Many mines were even so-called drift mines owned and operated by a single individual assisted by family and friends. Increasingly, since the 1950s, the organization of the industry has been dominated by large and still larger corporations while subterranean production has shifted to surface mining. Mountain Top Removal, the most extreme form of surface mining, fully excavates the upper reaches of regional peaks, with expectations of reclamation, often unfulfilled, post-extraction.

Coal's long-term and multi-dimensional importance in the two regions means that even in decline, mining continues to influence material conditions, social relations, and mentalities. Both regions are moving "Beyond Coal," as the Sierra Club suggests (Sierra Club 2018) but, as a function of politics, differ in how fast and how far along they are in the process. Mining is still politically and economically powerful, though severely stressed in Appalachia, and this ambiguity prompts both great support for and challenge to coal mining. All the Carpathian countries follow EU energy policy to one extent or another. The Czech Republic and Slovakia are gradually winding down support of mining, though Poland, with its strong coal sector and miners' unions, envisions a lengthier process to coal's end. However, Romania has fully gotten behind EU policy and is rapidly shuttering mines in the Jiu Valley, though lignite production in sub-Carpathian Oltenia continues for the future. So, though differences in geology and sectoral support distinguish the regions, to understand people's lives and futures, technology and environment and even policy must be explained by other political, social, and cultural forces. These influence responses to coal's decline, determine which social groups will be empowered and which laid low in the process, and how diverse groups will mobilize in struggles over capital and over the meaning of past, present, and future.

3. Structural power: Explaining regional variation-social class and labor relations

I consider variation between regional coal communities best explained by different organization and expressions of structural power. Anthropologist Eric Wolf (1999) considered structural power as expressed in an integrated lattice of economic, social, political, and ideological structures at any level of organization, whether global, national, regional, or local. Using power as an organizing perspective shows that general absence of power for communities and citizens in both regions is an essential commonality. However, the causes of this absence, its social and cultural manifestations, and the actualities and potentials for regaining power for agency and resistance within this powerlessness are highly disparate.

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Structural power first manifests in regional class relations, that is in property ownership and labor control. Typically, analysis of ownership and labor control in the mining sector worldwide defines a common triad of stakeholders of corporation, state, and community (Ballard and Banks 2003). However, these are fluid entities with different connections to NGOs, international players, and the like, thus expressing different qualities of power. We see this clearly when the Jiu Valley and the Carpathians are compared with Appalachian conditions.

Effective ownership and control by states versus that of private interests, shapes the power equation in the regions. Large corporations dominate the coal sector in both the Carpathians and Appalachia but differ greatly in their significance. Carpathian energy corporations are only recently liberated from state control, often have the state as their sole shareholder and consumer and are intensively regulated by both national states and the European Union. This is especially the case in the Jiu Valley. In Appalachia, however, private ownership is truly private. Energy corporations are often held by interests outside the region, have a great deal of sway over state politicians and regulatory structures (Vietor 1980), and over the employment and control of labor (Corbin 2015).

The significance of the power of Carpathian states or Appalachian private interests is vividly illustrated by the circumstances and history of regional labor and labor activism. These are based on different principles and waged for different goals in the two regions. In both, early union organizing sought to overcome differences in ethnicity and language among mining populations, imported from diverse zones by Yankee industrialists in Appalachia or Habsburg entrepreneurs in the Jiu Valley. Into the 1920s battle lines were clear between capital and labor in both regions. But after the First World War, regional syndicalism diverged, dependent on principles of ownership.

Appalachian miners' struggle against the coal companies culminated in the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain where private security guards and federal troops serving mine owners slaughtered dozens, delaying unionizing for more than a decade (Corbin 2015). Since the 1970s, many Appalachian mine operators weaken unions by closing mines with active locals and reopening them as non-union shops, by supporting company-friendly locals, and by strike-breaking. However, the memory of union struggles remains strong in places, motivating persistent labor actions, though the movement is riven between locals supporting or challenging ownership.

Such strategies are impossible in the Jiu Valley. Romanian unification after the First World War enabled either outright nationalization of Valley mines or subservience of private owners to the state, as workers and the state became parties to labor conflict. The miners' syndicate became a virtual state extension with the capture of state power by the Romanian Workers (i.e. Communist) Party after

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the Second World War. The Valley-wide strike of 1977 ignored the company (Matinal 1997), and forced Communist Party General Secretary, Nicolae Ceaușescu, to the Valley to negotiate with striking miners. The Romanian state was especially implicated in the *mineriade,* the 1990 and 1991 Bucharest invasions, where miners marched at the behest of politicians whom they felt supported their economic interests. But since the decline of the industry, the integrated union has broken apart into separate, competing entities and strikes and resistance remain limited, as much a function of internecine union competition as the weakness of the coal sector.

4. On the nature of regional social power

The degree of integration and cooperation of local social groups influences the relative power of communities faced with corporate or state power. Community power can be inferred by variables such as regional population conditions, the organization of families and density of social networks, and the number, kind, and activities of non-governmental organizations that enable or challenge dominant class interests. Settlement and population structures and pressures on population express one sort of social power. Superficially it might seem these factors enable greater power for Jiu Valley society to counter the overarching state, while weakening Appalachian social relations in the face of corporate control. The Jiu Valley is an integrated urban settlement system arrayed along the East and West branches of the Jiu River. The region's compactness eases transportation, communication, and cultural similarity, while the declining and aging regional population is countered by state aid and predictable pensions enabling retired miners to remain in place. Both ensure a functioning, though slowed, economic system, suggested by lively Valley terraces and bars.

Still, Jiu Valley families and social networks have been fragmented by a number of forces over the years. Life in socialist apartment complexes, where residence often reflected common mine employment, provided many community structures. However, these atrophied when many new workers were imported from other regions after the 1977 strike, unemployment in the mining industry starting in the late 1990s, and now by migration of Valley youth. Thus, Valley networks today are weak. Families and friends tend adhere among themselves with little in the way of broad family coalitions. Regional records list about 400 NGOs, but most are inactive with few umbrella organizations linking them. Valley community social power is also downgraded by the general silence and the invisibility of women in the public sphere. The mining industry in the Valley was always heavily masculinized (Kideckel 2004, Rus 2003). And this was intensified by

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lack of female employment possibilities and long-standing gender bias in Romanian culture. Jiu Valley people are more resigned to coal's end, less overtly conflicted amongst each other, but also less motivated for change. EU policy forecloses mining's future, but EU and Romanian development schemes and transfers subsidize some relief from the pains, maintain social peace, and prod economic growth as mining comes undone. There are efforts at reinvention, growth in tourism and some small homegrown industrial development. A few individuals push the Jiu Valley envelope, such as attempts to create a mining heritage complex at the former Petrila mine spear-headed by artist Ion Barbu, assisted by local youth and activists from Bucharest. But they are exceptions that prove the rule. Others are frustrated by the obstacles created by political gatekeepers and at the corruption intensified by infusion of development aid and the fire sale of mining industry's resources.

Circumstances are inversed in Appalachia. On the surface, Appalachian socio-economic and geographic conditions imply limited community power. However, those conditions actually reflect an elaborate organizational environment and possibilities of pushback against corporate domination. Central Appalachian communities are often dispersed in distinct valleys. Every "holler" is its own micro-culture and regional travel can be circuitous and time-consuming. Furthermore, private mine ownership and union decline influences a problematic demography. Unpredictable pensions and health care benefits push people to leave, and resources and possibilities leave with them. Abandoned houses and hollers attest to Appalachia's limited state support while family integrity is weakened by the regional health crisis. Still, compared to the Jiu Valley, Appalachian communities had a stronger family structure. Many communities were formed by just a few families and they retain their presence in family cemeteries, holiday rituals, and in the many small churches across the region. Churches, too, are often active in community assistance projects, though their bolstering family power is often diluted by their conservativism and frequent support for corporate coal.

Coal company attempts to preserve their power and foster their "Friends of Coal" ideology (Bell and York 2010) splits the regional population into pro and anti-coal camps. Growth of NGOs that support or challenge coal furthers conflict but also enables social experimentation and innovation in renewable energy, tourism, education, agriculture, health care services, community development. Such efforts are incipient, but have begun to make a difference. Gender power also plays a role. Appalachian corporate domination historically facilitated women's activism. Jessica Wilkerson in "To Live Here You Have to Fight (2018)" shows women as leaders in the environmental movement, and especially against mountain top removal. Women's activism even enabled the union movement and continues to this day as evidenced by the 2019 strike of West Virginia's teachers against the state school board.

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5. Social power, memory, and nostalgia: Regional variations

Ideological power is partially reflected in control of meaning, that reaffirms or undermines the power of class, the state, and local groups. People understand coal's decline in part through memory and interpretations of the past. Memories of coal are shaped by prevailing power relations which, in turn, reinforce or challenge those same relations. French social scientist Maurice Halbwachs suggested (1992) that people recall select memories to affirm identity, while forgetting in whole or in part contradictory thoughts and events. Pierra Nora (1989) differentiates authentic "memory milieux" from invented "memory sites." The former entails individualized experience of family and community events and local ritual while, in the latter, persons are merged as citizens or subjects in state commemorations as, for example, in museums or national celebrations. Nostalgia ensues when memories express longing for the past. However, as Daphne Berdahl (1999) suggested in writing of the fall of socialist East Germany, expressions of nostalgia more challenge the present than reproduce that past.

Coal memories and expressions of nostalgia today are especially inflected by the depth of the current crisis. As the site of production and of coal lives, mine and coal town, were central to coal miner and mining family identities. Consequently, decline and loss of mining and livelihoods supercharge feelings of loss of belonging and problematic regional identity, and heighten critique of the present. To an extent, views of the past are shaped by one's social position, whether owner, manager, pit boss, unskilled worker, union man, storekeeper or homemaker. Common to both regions, former miners recall the security of work and incomes and camaraderie that coal jobs provided. Even danger and death in the mines is memorialized as an extreme work condition that helped cement the unity of mine workers. But given the crisis, recalled pleasures of collective labor, worker solidarity, leisure with colleagues, and pride in coal's role in national or regional development, are twinned with feelings of anger, inadequacy, or unreciprocated sacrifice, making for persistent regional tension.

Despite common memories of mine labor, regional memory production is differentiated by dominant power principles, thus furthering prevailing regional social relations. The state is the context for problematic Jiu Valley coal memories. People conjure how state practice supported or stifled miner lives, thus producing a sense of wounded collectivity. As in socialism, the state presence generates notions of "us (i.e. miners)" and them (i.e. bureaucrats and officials). Carrying this forward, mine pensioners today recollect how "democracy" induced corruption at socialism's end and Romania's rapid integration in global exchange precipitated the region's industrial decline. In contrast in Appalachia, memory production enhances

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social division. Recollections of childhood, family, and community are influenced by company domination of local life, memorialized as providing well-being for some but robbing others of resources and the region of wealth and beauty. One former lower level mine manager recollected how tension between union workers and managers threatened his relationships with his miner relatives, even with his father, a staunch union man. Ascendant company memories thus help create boundaries between different social groups, furthering divided Appalachian realities.

6. Heritage and structural power

Memories are filtered through and enacted within heritage institutions and practices, like museums and memorials. Again, the regions differ extensively in elaboration and treatment of heritage. Appalachia's vibrant and contentious heritage complex contrasts extensively with muted treatment of Valley heritage. Appalachia has more heritage than it can handle and the vast array of regional practices--music, dance, cuisine, moonshining, folktales and legends—seem as much a response to the denigration of the region by outsiders as statements of culture's importance to Appalachians. In the Jiu Valley, excepting some practices of autochthonous Momârlani mountain pastoralists, the poverty of heritage stands out compared to the richness of the *minerit's* past of brass bands, theatre troops, embellished funerary ritual, and the like (Rus 2003). In Petroșani and throughout the Valley, smatterings of mine heritage like miner lamps, sculptures, and mosaics dot Valley towns. However, since the fall of socialism, the region's heritage has been intensely commodified, resulting in the destruction of many important sites dating to the early twentieth century, the industry's heyday, and repurposing of other important sites away from heritage remembrance, again with the exception of the aforementioned Petrila initiative.

Variations in regional "dark heritage" commemorating past traumatic events are especially acute. In Appalachia community and company sympathizers jockey for control of the regional narrative in displays about labor history, mine accidents, and daily life. Appalachian museums devoted to aspects of coal history are numerous, but their different types of presentations reflect the on-going contentiousness of coal. Regional museums are arrayed on a continuum from the measured support of past company practices at the Beckley model mine museum to fervently oppositional exhibits at the Matewan Mine Wars Museum, recalling the violence against unionizing miners at the Battle of Blair Mountain (Corbin 2015), to the evocative presentation of coal camp life at the Whipple Company Store.

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Bifurcation of dark heritage is evident in two memorials to the April 2010 Upper Big Branch mine explosion, that killed twenty-nine miners, sending then-president of Massey Energy, Don Blankenship, to federal prison for negligence. Both memorials are located near the mine along the highway in Whitesville, Raleigh County, West Virginia. A community-funded memorial echoes the authenticity of Nora's memory milieux. Located at the base of a coal conveyor-belt tower, the memorial integrates photos of the dead with religious symbolism. Each victim's portrait is displayed, with helmets resting on individualized crosses. A wreath of plastic vine is entwined with cut-out plastic hearts and angels, with each victim's name on the cut-out. The "Serenity Prayer" asking to "accept the things one cannot change" is the only text.

In contrast, the "official" memory site commemorates West Virginia coal more than the dead miners. The memorial, a 50-foot piece of polished granite cut in the shape of the Appalachian skyline, was erected by a local non-profit with donations from the county Chamber of Commerce, the Alpha Natural Resources company, and local government. A depersonalized outline of the 29 men standing arm-in-arm is etched on the highway side of the memorial. Of eight sections of inscribed passages on the reverse side, only one concerns the disaster itself. Others include "The Story of Coal," a history of local railroads, a poem entitled "Daddy's Hands" honoring "all working men who suffer," a section on "King Coal today," and one on the Battle of Blair Mountain. Meanwhile, the memorial's website offers souvenir t-shirts for $31.00.

In the Jiu Valley, state memory sites predominate, but their sparseness suggests suppression of the past and a kind of "organized forgetting" (Roller 2018) that deprives the region of a sympathetic recounting of its history and heritage. Few sites attest to traumatic regional events. Some include the statue memorializing the 1927 strike at Lupeni mine resulting in the deaths of twenty some individuals (the precise number is still debated), or the fading stone stela in the Vulcan town cemetery marking a 1922 explosion at the local mine. Memorials to the checkered history of the *minerit,* its compromises with state power (Montias 1967), and especially the mineriade of the 1990s-are nowhere to be found. Forced channeling of heritage seems especially the case in Petroșani's Muzeul Mineritului, the Museum of the Mining Industry. Everything about the Museum, now in reconstruction, was defined, as it were from "above." Exhibits over-emphasized technology and elide discussion of Jiu Valley social relations, mining during socialism, and industrial decline over the last thirty years.

Some practices in both regions counter authorized heritage imposed from above, though Appalachian activities are more varied and frequent. In Appalachia heritage typically enlivens every local gathering, from birthday parties to

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community events. Musical skills and/or knowledge of folklore, dance, and local foods like celebrations of wild ramps, ginseng, and mushrooms are widespread. Many heritage-related practices occur within the context of state-sponsored "memory" events, like local "Coal Days" carnivals or cemetery clean-ups on Memorial Day. In contrast, quotidian Jiu Valley heritage practices are nearly non-existent. Music at most gatherings is modern pop, or so-called "manele," a syncretic mix of Romany and traditional Romanian music. People hunt mushrooms and berries in the uplands but largely for home use or market. Young people hike, cycle, and camp, informally celebrating mountain and environmental regional heritage, but this is entirely idiosyncratic. The few traditions that remain, e.g. the brass band at funerals or Miners' Day celebrations in August, are enacted within state-sanctioned contexts.

Exceptions that prove the rule of state domination of memory sites in the Jiu Valley are so-called Nedei, annual celebrations of the region's mountain peasants and of pastoral life, symbolized by the main course of lamb soup. Hosted by particular towns or villages, Nedei are celebrated with music, dancing, public drinking, acts of charity, and day-long commensality while enacting a mix of Christian liturgy, civic religion, family reunion, and upland-lowland exchange. Some Nedei are renowned and attract hundreds of participants, including village and townspeople returning from residence in far-flung cities and counties. Still Nedei are actively eroded by formal institutions. They are advertised on TV and in the press. They are compromised by local politicians, and informants suggest they lasted longer and were more ribald before Momârlani began working in Valley mines in large numbers, in the late 1970s. Many celebrants must return to work the day after the feast and so merry-making is restricted.

7. Power, policy, and possibilities for regional futures

This brief tour of regional social relations and memory confirms the significance of structural power for shaping variation between these declining coal regions. But whatever the complex determinates of regional variation, coal's quickening decline demands effective policy for communities caught in these changes. Too often, however, policy is based on fictitious or stereotypical renderings of those about whom policy change focuses. In contrast, a concern for structural power demands grounding policy choices with human actualities. Still, focus on individuals as the ultimate end of policy implementation encourages views that values and mindsets mainly determine human choice, behavior, and agency. And though regional values are broadly different, a value focus often misinterprets grounded reality.

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For example, some suggest that Appalachian folks, despite regional hardships, operate with asset-based mentalities that seek to use one's internal strengths to take advantage of opportunities, asking "what can we accomplish in these difficult circumstances?" The official discourse of the Appalachian Regional Commission is notable for this (Appalachian Regional Commission 2004). The self-reliance implied in this perspective often serves as an excuse by some leaders and policymakers to not engage the region in any systematic way. Similarly, some suggest that Jiu Valley folk (if not Romanians generally) see the world in a deficit-based way, focusing on one's problems and absent needs, asking "what are we missing in these circumstances," looking to others to satisfy those absences (cf. Mihailescu, Ed. 2017). This, too, enables "blaming the victim," when piecemeal development efforts come to naught.

Considerable ethnographic evidence may convince that asset and deficit mindsets call the tune for the regions. For example, attitudes are resolutely positive for many Appalachians who have withstood the worst of the attack on culture, economy, family, health care, faith and community. I think of two friends from either side of the Tug Fork River, the border between Mingo County, West Virginia and Pike County, Kentucky, who without formal education or economic support began both a museum of Appalachian history and a small shop selling items made by local artisans. They struggle daily but are optimistic they will succeed and make a difference. At the same time, many friends in the Jiu Valley forgo seeking development funds offered by the EU or the Romanian state since they assume there is no way around the corruption that demands kickbacks that simultaneously diminish the value of assistance while requiring political obeisance.

But the focus on this modal behavior while ignoring numerous outliers is the fallacy of this psychological reductionism. Though an asset mindset is strong in Appalachia, the emptying of the region of many of its most energetic people and the frustrations that unfunded pensions and rampant health problems produce force many to focus on loss and deficit. The former owner of a regional museum gave up her struggle to remain open since she felt the lack of clients and of state assistance doomed her endeavor. Analogously, despite widespread deficit thinking among Valley people, others seek gain despite systemic frustration of their entrepreneurial activities. One former miner used his free time to begin a small business selling candy and trinkets to his work mates. Despite withering criticism for trying to be bigger than they are, he persisted and now owns a business with numerous commercial outlets.

When concerned with the individual as the ultimate end of policy, such approaches thus focus on creating enabling conditions for individuals to overcome their problems. To be sure, job training, addiction counseling, new internet

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connections, and the like are critical for regional futures (Spross 2019). This is the logic behind worthy ideas of the "Just Transition" that concern securing the livelihoods of people implicated in energy transformation. However, effective policy must also burrow beneath specific behavioral responses. Policy must recognize how conditions like unemployment and pathologies like demographic decline, cascading health problems, or environmental degradation, themselves grow from the structuration of power that enable such problems to take root in the first place.

Successful policy initiatives that recognize structural power would turn prevailing political economic structures and relationships on their heads. In the Jiu Valley, dependence on the state is a mixed bag, pushing many to wait for the right investment scheme or subsidy to kick the region into high gear. But state follow-through on past promises has been sketchy and the region remains forcibly removed from the past while awaiting a future that never arrives. Consequently, the challenge in the Valley is to marginalize the state and dependency to unleash human energy, anti-corruption practices, and intensified infrastructural development. Community initiatives ought to be supported in every way. Transparent and carefully administered grant competitions to empower women's organizations, heritage groups, and tourist associations can complement and multiply the effects of state and EU assistance.

In central Appalachia the situation is at once more dire and more promising. Though coal's decline is assured, stripping coal will remain significant for the near future and the ensuing tensions and environmental challenges will continue to echo in regional social relations. Nonetheless, the degree of initiative bubbling up from community groups, NGOs, environmental activists, and even private business is heartening, even if such energy contributes to regional conflict. Consequently, to enable the strengthening of initiative, while dampening conflict, a renewed and aggressive state regulatory apparatus must both challenge and work with energy companies to transform coal mining and support alternative investment. Sketchy environmental remediation practices must be improved and used as a source of regional employment. Local NGOs, rather than dismissed as tree hugging do-gooders, should be included in change initiatives in a new pact with government and business. Above all, predictable pensions and health care can provide a threshold for stability and growth.

Policy aside, the essentialization, if not brutalization, of mountain and mining community images means that both regions need cultural champions and sustained campaigns to challenge narratives furthering inaction and self-denigration within the zones or discrimination from without. Enabling such champions and campaigns might be harder even than conjuring effective policy for social transformation. We need only note the run-away success of JD Vance's book Hillbilly Elegy (2016), soon to be a major

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motion picture, or never-ending Romanian commissions and special publications exploring *mineriade* depredations, now some thirty years old (Martin, ed 2015, Rus 2007). Policy initiatives likely will come to little lest they are bolstered by broad acceptance of and arguing for the worth of regional images and identities, denigration of which has been product and manifestation of the structures of power. As Ronald Eller says, there is a need to recognize the importance of a "new old value system, that neither romanticizes the past nor ignores its impact on the present (Eller 2012, 39)."

Without such transformations the regions, by virtue of their multiple marginalities, will continue as targets for abuse and corrupt practices, made worse by the decline of coal. A recent New York Times article is illustrative. This told how unemployed West Virginia miners were manipulated by the so-called Mindful Minds company into accepting training for computer coding jobs that never materialized (Robertson 2019). This, of course, pales in significance next to the way by which some Appalachian coal companies avoid their pension, health, and environmental responsibilities, aided by favorable bankruptcy rulings. In the Jiu Valley, meanwhile, the mining industry is overwhelmed by sweetheart deals, purchasing of refurbished equipment at new equipment prices, paid no-show administrative positions, and self-dealing as a feature, not a bug, of the system.

Countering all this chicanery will demand heroic work by activists, journalists, educators, union leaders, and concerned citizens. Only such concerted, and wherever possible, joint efforts will push back on the power structures, relations, and mentalities dominating these regions. Coal is certainly on the way out. But the structuration of economic, political, social and ideological power that characterized coal mining, and that has dominated these zones in one way or another for some 150 years, will not give way easily, with or without the carbon economy. New senses and relations of community are possible, but only formed in concert with new structures of power. This gives greater import to the demand that people throw off their imposed limitations in Appalachia and their reactive ennui in the Jiu Valley. As said in Romanian, "așa să fie." That is, we can only hope this will come to pass.

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