

CLIMATE JUSTICE IN ACTION: Communities Working Towards Just Transitions



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Thank you to all the individuals and organizations that agreed to be interviewed for this report and who shared with us invaluable resources and insights into their work and their vision for a Just Transition

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INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, people of color and poor, marginalized communities face the greatest threats from climate change and often have the least access to resources and institutional processes of decision making around mitigation and resiliency strategies. Several networks of grassroots activist organizations are working within these communities to increase political engagement, draw attention to climate justice issues, and help implement strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change on their communities. Additionally, these locally-grounded and globally-networked groups are forging alternative pathways to achieving a vision of climate justice – one rooted in a *Just Transition*, linking economic and ecological models with democratic practices, local cultures, and social justice. This report explores the groundbreaking vision of several grassroots groups across the United States whose innovative strategies include community empowerment through organizing, youth leadership programs, worker cooperatives, land use and policy reforms, as well as energy democracy projects and policies. While the goal of many of these grassroots groups is to address environmental burdens in their communities, they also seek to more broadly transform the inequitable political and economic conditions that are so deeply entrenched in society and give rise to environmental injustice.

This report is the result of a collaboration with the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) and in particular, features the work of their *Our Power* pilot communities.¹

*The Climate Justice Alliance has launched the national Our Power Campaign to win real solutions to the climate crisis – solutions that will foster quality jobs that meet people’s needs while caring for the natural resources and ecosystems we depend on. We are flexing Our Power at the local, regional, and state levels and building towards affecting national policy to bring about a Just Transition. We launched the campaign in June 2013 in three pilot sites: Black Mesa, Arizona; Detroit, Michigan; Richmond, California. In August 2014 we added three more: Jackson, Mississippi; San Antonio Texas; and the state of Kentucky. The pilot sites are a racially and ethnically diverse mix of rural and urban communities, and are home to key grassroots groups poised to take on the extreme energy economy driving climate change.*²

The *Our Power* communities are united in their focus to achieve a Just Transition away from the extractive economy and towards a regenerative economy based on local living economic models of sustainability. These grassroots organizations are articulating their own vision of a Just Transition and are finding innovative ways to realize climate justice through the implementation of Just Transition strategies. "We must immediately begin to transition out of an extractive economy ...But to do this we must create new jobs and a safety net for workers who will transition out of those specific industries as well as the broader communities impacted by extreme energy."³ Many of the strategies that will be explored in this report reflect the major pillars of a Just Transition articulated by CJA, including: **Building Local Living Economies, Building Community Resilience, and Building Movement**. It is our hope that the reflections and insights summarized here will support the efforts of CJA member groups and beyond by amplifying their efforts and informing local, national and international efforts to address the climate crisis through strategies for a Just Transition.

¹ The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) is a collaborative of over 35 community-based and movement support organizations uniting frontline communities... CJA website, <http://www.ourpowercampaign.org>

² Movement General Website, <http://movementgeneration.org/our-work/movementbuilding-2/cjaourpower/>

³ Ibid.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most climate change policy discussions, from the recent COP21 to our own nation's Clean Power Plan, emphasize technological breakthroughs and market-based interventions such as carbon trading. In other circles, the conversation is focused on how to convince a seemingly apathetic public or inspire mass mobilization on a scale that would drive positive international and national policy initiatives forward. Rarely do we have an opportunity to reflect on the seemingly small, but burgeoning efforts of thousands of community-based organizations throughout the world, committed to innovative and alternative strategies to tackling climate change and inequality.

This report is a direct response to those who may dismiss the power and potential of grassroots activism and action – work that is often poorly funded, rarely written about, and not widely known. These burgeoning efforts are a work-in-progress, evolving, and in many cases, charting new territory. We believe that highlighting these efforts will inspire others and help nurture a trans-national movement for climate justice.

The leaders of this movement have much to share with us about their Just Transition work. They reflected on strategies employed on the ground, taught us about the evolution of the movement and their respective organizations, described how they envision the future of their work, the scope and scalability of their efforts. The insights contained in this report reflect the depth of experience, expertise, practice and leadership on the ground in communities of color and low-income communities throughout the US. The best practices and overarching lessons in this report are derived from the study of eight pilot organizations in six locations throughout the country. These pilot organizations were selected for more in-depth exploration on the basis of their active engagement in piloting activities on the ground related to the Our Power campaign launched by CJA.

The report includes brief case overviews describing each of the pilot organizations and their work on climate justice related issues. The lessons, best practices and resources summarized in the report are compiled from a variety of primary and secondary sources including interviews (with both CJA members as well as other leaders in the field), as well as literature from the field. The key highlights of the report reflect the breadth and depth of resources found in communities engaged in the daily struggles of improving their material and social conditions on the ground.

Strategies on the Ground

CJA organizations implement a broad range of strategies and tactics in their efforts to work towards a Just Transition. All draw on the essential organizing principles that have defined the environmental justice movement for decades. They actively organize local residents who are burdened by the negative impacts of environmental and economic practices that exploit workers and residents. Empowering local people is perhaps the most essential component of creating a Just Transition to a climate justice vision. Other salient strategies include youth leadership training, public policy and legislative advocacy, political organizing, economic and community development projects, community based research, as well as land use and community based planning efforts.

Lessons from Practice

Perhaps the most important contribution of these organizations to climate justice is that they are testing out and articulating strategies based on a Just Transition framework. Just Transition strategies embody a shift from the fossil fuel, capitalist economy relying heavily on the exploitation of nature and people, to locally-based, culturally embedded, living economies promoting self determination and environmental justice. The case studies reflect the diversity of practices and practical challenges associated with alternative systems of economic and environmental well-being. Their reflections on what a Just Transition means in their respective local communities and how that links to a larger global context sheds light on the possibilities for scaling up local living economy models.

Ananda Lee Tan, a veteran EJ activist, reflects on the work of the CJA organizations and is encouraged by the increasing focus on Just Transition strategies as a way to materialize real strategies for implementing the ambitious goals of climate justice. "***We know that the goal is to achieve climate justice but how do we get there - what are the mechanisms for taking control over and fundamentally changing the systems that produce these injustices?***"⁴ The Just Transition discourse begins to answer this question by directing communities towards coalition alignment and building alternative development strategies. In this report, we highlight some key insights including the collective definitions of *Just Transition*, what it means to scale up, how organizations are measuring their success, and the possibilities for collective work and democratic governance. These *Our Power* communities are also forging relationships and sharing knowledge with vulnerable communities around the world under the growing climate justice movement and thus are advancing the vision of a globally linked movement.

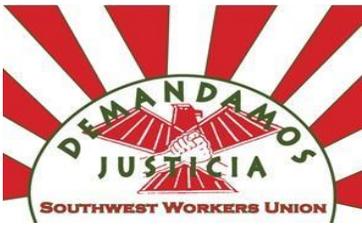
Challenges Ahead

Although communities are increasingly redefining the terms of what constitutes a Just Transition and true climate justice, there are still many obstacles to implementing systemic change. Communities lack access to critical resources to implement alternative models of sustainable, locally controlled, living economies. These efforts require not just access to capital but a fundamental transformation of political and economic conditions on a global scale. These challenges highlight the need to strengthen ties between groups working across various political, geographic and issue fronts in order to leverage limited resources and shift the narrative about what's possible.

⁴ Ananda Lee Tan, Interview, July 24, 2015

OUR POWER PILOT BRIEFS

1. Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)
2. Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMWC)
3. Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)
4. Cooperation Jackson (CJ)
5. East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC)
6. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTCW)
7. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER)
8. Southwest Workers Union (SWU)



ASIAN PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK (APEN)



Mission, Structure, and History

Founded in 1993, the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) focuses on achieving environmental justice for all people where they live, work and play. APEN's mission and vision aims to achieve environmental justice, *"through building an organized movement, we strive to bring fundamental changes to economic and social institutions that will prioritize public good over profits and promote the right of every person to a decent, safe, affordable quality of life, and the right to participate in decisions affecting our lives."*⁵

The organization is a membership based, non-profit with a diverse board of directors and staff. APEN has deep roots in cities such as Richmond, California, where a Laotian community endures environmental and economic hardships living in the shadow of the Chevron refinery. These local struggles inform their efforts to establish systemic change through public policy, local planning, as well as energy and environmental laws.

Location and Geographic Focus

APEN has offices located in both Oakland and Richmond, California – two communities with large concentrations of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) populations. Although they are located primarily in the Bay Area, APEN also collaborates with API communities regionally and nationally, particularly via the Asian Pacific American Climate Coalition. APEN is able to occupy a unique organizing space by cutting across multiple cultures, races, languages and ethnicities under the API umbrella.

Strategies for Change

APEN has an explicit three-pronged strategy for achieving their mission that includes civic engagement, organizing, and advocacy work. *"The heart and soul of APEN's work is building and expanding a powerful membership base of low-income API immigrant and refugee communities. APEN members and leaders guide all aspects of the organization's campaign and movement building work."*⁶ The organization has also developed a sophisticated statewide and national network to engage in public policy advocacy and legislative work.

⁵ APEN website, <http://apen4ej.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision/>

⁶ APEN website, <http://apen4ej.org/what-we-do/organizing/>

Key Initiatives & Projects

- [Policy](#) (Distributed generation, Community Choice Energy, Green Jobs, AB32)
- [Civic engagement](#) (Voter registration, education and outreach, Prop 23, etc.)
- [Organizing](#) (Asian Pacific Climate Coalition, Richmond, Oakland, Leadership Development)

Reflections from the Field

The experience of working with politically marginalized API communities has helped shape APEN's approach to achieving climate justice particularly when it comes to defining what a Just Transition should look like. *"We think that good policies come from the wisdom on the ground"* says Mari Rose Taruc.⁷ In reflecting on the most critical lessons to share with other groups, Vivian Huang suggests that it is important to connect the work being done on multiple levels from the very local to the national and doing so in ways that are not just policy or academic based but in the language people understand.⁸

⁷ Mari Rose Taruc. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, July 15, 2015

⁸ Vivian Huang, Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, June 22, 2015

BLACK MESA WATER COALITION (BMWC)



Mission, Structure, and History

Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMWC) was founded in 2001 by an inter-tribal, inter-ethnic group of indigenous leaders who wanted to address issues of water depletion, natural resource exploitation, and the promotion of healthy environments within Navajo and Hopi communities. *“BMWC’s mission is to preserve and protect Mother Earth and the integrity of Indigenous People’s culture with the vision of building sustainable and healthy communities.”*⁹

Black Mesa is home to two coal mines and endures a legacy of natural resource exploitation that has only served to deepen the economic and environmental crisis for the Navajo Nation and the whole region. In an area that was mined and used to power an entire region with coal, a large percentage of Navajo people in the area have no access to electricity. BMWC seeks to break with this fossil fuel dependent economy not just as a sustainability strategy but for cultural survival, *“in teaching us to ignore our traditional teachings to love, respect, and protect Mother Earth, our current fossil fuel based economy has made us dependent on our own cultural destruction.”*¹⁰ BMWC is structured as a non-profit organization with a diverse board made up of indigenous leaders from the Hopi and Navajo nations. BMWC aspires to break the dependence on a fossil fuel economy and build living economies that can reconnect them to their land and culture in sustainable ways.

Location and Geographic Focus

BMWC organizes throughout the Black Mesa Mountain region, especially within the Navajo and Hopi communities. BMWC has main offices located in the Southside neighborhood of Flagstaff, Arizona. While much of their work focuses on building the local economy and protecting the environment in the Black Mesa area, they also contribute to national and international discourse on climate justice issues and indigenous rights.

Strategies for Change

BMWC uses multiple strategies to organize for change. They are working in three key areas to achieve their mission: 1. **No Coal, Environmental Justice Program**, which seeks to not just stop coal mining and coal plants in the region but also to replace them with renewable energy. 2. Promoting **Green Economies** that can, *“...exemplify an appropriate development path that honors the sacred ecological*

⁹ Black Mesa Water Coalition Website, <http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org/bmwchistory.html>

¹⁰ Ibid

relationships and incorporates traditional practices into economic development."¹¹ Most importantly, BMWC is committed to **Movement Building** through leadership development, particularly among indigenous youth.

Key Initiatives & Projects

Many of the projects BMWC is currently engaged in involves the cultivation of local green businesses and leadership development within the community:

- [No Coal and Environmental Justice Program](#) (Water protection, Energy cooperatives, etc.)
- [Navajo Green Economy Program](#) (Navajo Wool Market Project, Food Security Project, etc.)
- [Leadership Development & Movement Building Program](#)

Reflections from the Field

BMWC has a deep connection to and a profound awareness of climate injustice. Their communities have suffered for generations at the hands of exploitative economic and environmental practices that have devastated their communities, their cultural practices and their very survival. Jihan Gearon, the Executive Director of BMWC states, "*Indigenous communities for a long time have been talking about climate change because it is integral that our lifestyles are interactive with our land and environment.*"¹² For BMWC, climate justice means not just building solar farms and fighting coal mines – it means building new living economies that can restore the earth and native culture.

¹¹ BMWC Website, <http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org/ourwork.html>

¹² Jihan Gearson. Black Mesa Water Coalition. Interview, July 22, 2015

COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT



Mission, Structure, and History

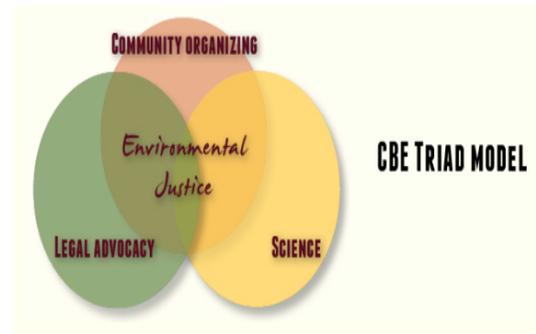
Founded in 1978, Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) is one of the leading environmental justice organizations in the country. CBE's mission is "to build people's power in California's communities of color and low-income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green, healthy and sustainable communities and environments."¹³ CBE aims to change the environmental policies and practices that put the health and well-being of vulnerable communities at risk across the state. CBE is a non-profit organization with members in various EJ communities throughout California and has a diverse staff and board representative of the communities they serve. They are also member of dozens of national, statewide, and regional alliances, and has a long history of battles against entrenched industrial and political interests in some of California's most polluted communities, from Richmond to Los Angeles. They have extensive experience in achieving groundbreaking victories over oil refineries, power plants, ports and freeways in California as well as legal, political and organizing experience in advancing local and statewide strategies – ones that address both the economic and environmental aspects of a Just Transition.

Location and Geographic Focus

CBE has offices in Huntington, Richmond, Oakland and Los Angeles. CBE is active on the ground, working with residents in both northern and southern California environmental justice communities, but many of their policy campaigns are statewide.

Strategies for Change

CBE's model for achieving environmental justice is based on a Triad Model that includes Organizing, Science, and Legal advocacy. In addition to these approaches, the organization uses media strategies that amplify their work on the ground.¹⁴



Key Initiatives & Projects

- [Climate & Environmental Justice](#) (i.e. Air Quality litigation)
- [Clean Energy and the Green Economy](#) (i.e. Renewables policies)
- [Charge Ahead](#)
- [Green Zones](#)
- [Clean Up, Green Up](#)

¹³ CBE Website, <http://www.cbecal.org/about/mission-vision/>

¹⁴ Ibid

Reflections from the Field

CBE's approach to climate justice and Just Transition work is founded on the history of local communities' struggles against the negative impacts that fossil fuel industries have had on their communities. Places like Richmond, California where one of the nation's largest oil refineries operates, represents the ultimate challenge in achieving a vision of a Just Transition in which communities build new energy and economic alternatives. In reflecting on the advice for other EJ communities and organizations, Bahrem Fazeli suggests that community development, EJ organizations and labor unions need to align their efforts to tackle climate change.¹⁵ In order to define and implement Just Transition practices, Fazeli suggests that organizations need to pilot demonstration projects and produce visible results, *"...Just Transition work never ends because in the end we have to build the new but we also have to decommission and dispose of the old."*¹⁶

¹⁵ Bahram Fazeli, Communities for Better Environment. Interview, July 7, 2015

¹⁶ Andrés Soto. Communities for Better Environment. Interview, July 20, 2015

COOPERATION JACKSON



Mission, Structure, and History

Cooperation Jackson is a cooperative network based in Jackson, Mississippi, one of the poorest metropolitan cities in the poorest state in the country. Cooperation Jackson is fighting against decades of economic divestment, deindustrialization, and suburban flight fueled by structural racism. In 2013, the network was born out of the development of the Jackson-Kush Plan, and is based on a vision of a democratic economy and an empowered community. *"[Our mission is] to advance the development of economic democracy in Jackson, Mississippi by building a solidarity economy anchored by a network of cooperatives and other types of worker-owned and democratically self-managed enterprises."*¹⁷

The [Jackson-Kush Plan](#) was the product of an effort launched in 2007 by the New Afrikan People's Organization, the [Malcolm X Grassroots Movement](#), and the Jackson People's Assembly to structure a transformative vision for Jackson, Mississippi. Cooperation Jackson is deeply rooted in the rich legacy of democratic leaders, cooperatives, and worker owned enterprises, particularly within the Afrikan community in the South. Cooperation Jackson is developing cooperative enterprises specializing in sustainable means of production and distribution that focuses on four interconnected and interdependent institutions: a federation of emerging local worker cooperatives, a cooperative incubator, a cooperative education and training center, and a cooperative bank. The organization has also outlined a Just Transition plan for the City of Jackson that links together the economic, environmental and human rights crises in the metropolitan area.

*"To improve the quality of life in our City and for the sake of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren we can and must end the overlapping environmental, climatic and human rights crises confronting us. Cooperation Jackson believes that we can solve these crises by organizing our communities to execute a comprehensive program that will protect our environment, curb our carbon emissions, stimulate employment, and democratically transfer wealth and equity."*¹⁸

Location and Geographic Focus

Cooperation Jackson currently works primarily in West Jackson, Mississippi. Their constituencies are low-income, African American residents who face under- or unemployment. However, the organization has a vision of transforming the whole city of Jackson as well as the state of Mississippi. They have

¹⁷ Cooperation Jackson Website, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org>

¹⁸ Cooperation Jackson Just Transition Plan, Website, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/blog/2015/11/10/the-jackson-just-transition-plan>

established strong trans-local alliances with cooperative networks and climate justice coalitions across the region as well as nationally and internationally.

Strategies for Change

Cooperation Jackson is guided by a set of core principles and values modeled on institutions such as [Mondragón](#) and the [International Cooperative Alliance](#), "based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others."¹⁹

Cooperation Jackson has acquired a large parcel of land which was placed into a Community Land Trust to begin establishing some of their core strategies. They anticipate nesting several cooperatives into an Eco-Village that will create an interdependent and sustainable model for living economies. The key components of their Sustainable Community Development Plan include a housing coop, a construction coop, a waste/recycling coop, freedom farms urban farming coop, a childcare coop and an arts and culture coop. Brandon King from Cooperation Jackson explains the interconnectedness of strategies that will build a strong foundation for a larger sustainable community initiative:

Our first class of cooperatives are interconnected and interdependent. We are starting with Freedom Farms Urban Farming Cooperative, Nubia's Place Café and Catering Cooperative, Mississippi Waste Alternative, and Revolutionary Resonance Arts & Culture Cooperative. The food that we grow in the farm will be the produce for Nubia's Cafe, which is run out of the Lumumba Center. Whatever refuse that is created, will go to the Mississippi Alternative, our recycling and composting cooperative. The compost that is produced will go back to the urban farm. Revolutionary Resonance Arts and Culture Cooperative will provide programming for the Lumumba Center that will work to increase traffic to Nubia's Café. In this way, we are engaging in a more sustainable way of constructing cooperative enterprises. "We are creating a cooperative ecosystem."²⁰

Key Initiatives & Projects

- [Sustainable Communities Initiative](#) (Eco Village, Coops, etc.)
- [Building Community Wealth Initiative](#) with [The Democracy Collaborative](#)
- [The Lumumba Center](#)

Reflections from the Field

Brandon King suggests that the work of Cooperation Jackson is tied to a broad vision of a just and sustainable society beyond Jackson Mississippi, "What we're doing is not just about building cooperatives. Cooperatives within a society that is highly problematic only benefits those who are a part of said cooperatives. **In order for sustainability, economic democracy, solidarity economy, and a Just Transition to be fully realized, we need to build a social movement to make these concepts a reality.**"²¹

Cooperation Jackson stresses the importance of being a part of coalitions such as the Climate Justice Alliance and Movement Generation. Being connected to other sites of resistance, innovation and organizing allows grassroots organizations like theirs to anticipate problems that may occur in their own community and share successful strategies.

¹⁹ Cooperation Jackson Website, Principles, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/principles>

²⁰ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson. Interview, July 17, 2015

²¹ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson. Interview, July 17, 2015

EAST MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COUNCIL (EMEAC)



Mission, Structure, and History

Since its founding in the 1960s, the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) has addressed the multiple environmental, economic, and social issues facing Detroit's residents. EMEAC's mission is, *"To empower the Detroit community to protect, preserve and value the land, air and water. We build community power through environmental justice education, youth development and collaborative relationship building."*²² William Copeland, EMEAC's Climate Justice Director reflects on the history and current conditions that inform their work, *"The current economy is exploiting Detroiters. There are many barriers to participating in it [the economy]."*²³ The economic conditions in Detroit have pushed generations of families into poverty and burdened them with air pollution, gentrification, water shutoffs and limited access to transportation and healthy food. For several decades, EMEAC has responded to the needs of the community by organizing resistance to polluting industries while simultaneously cultivating local leadership. It was involved in the passage of several state and local environmental laws and has been a leader in the vibrant Detroit food movement. EMEAC also has a long history of building coalitions to fight municipal waste as well as energy projects that threatened the well being of local communities. EMEAC has a core of youth organizers and local leaders that actively shape and help guide the organization. This organization embodies the struggles and the rich cultural and political organizing legacy of Detroit.

Location and Geographic focus

EMEAC's offices are located in Detroit where most of their work is focused. However, the organization is also active across the region as well as nationally, alongside networks aligned with their core mission. EMEAC also works on climate justice and cultural organizing that draws on the rich traditions of Pan-Africanism. This vision seeks to unite Black communities across the US who see their story of resistance as an important part of the Black experience in the US.

Strategies for Change

Detroit is home to some of the worst environmental injustices in the country as well as some of the most active voices for organized resistance. It is through this tradition of resistance that EMEAC has built a strong foundation for achieving a Just Transition: *"There are three main strategies that we will employ to build community resilience in Detroit's climate JUST TRANSITION: Youth, Family and Community led organizing; Political education; and Trans-local network building to build new and grassroots economies."*²⁴ The organization focuses intentionally on youth leadership and

²² EMEAC Website, <http://www.emeac.org/2010/11/about.html>

²³ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

²⁴ EMEAC Website, <http://www.emeac.org/2014/03/emeac-programs.html>

empowerment as well as art and cultural expression as a means to invigorate the community and achieve a Just Transition.

Key Initiatives & Projects

1. Youth, Family, Community Organizing
 - Greener Schools
 - Young Educators Alliance
2. New Economy & Political Education
 - Power Mapping
 - Cass Corridor Commons University and Universidad Sin Fronteras
3. Climate Justice
 - Zero Waste Detroit
 - People's Water Board
 - Re_AMP



Reflections from the Field

EMEAC is building a strong base of local leaders testing out creative organizing models to engage a broad swath of the community. Under the motto *it is not our fault, but it is our fight*, they mobilize and empower young people to engage in local environmental challenges and seek out systemic transformations in Detroit and beyond.²⁵ Last year, EMEAC hosted an *Our Power* gathering of over 130 climate justice leaders and young people from across the country. During the gathering they laid out their vision of what a Just Transition means for them as local activists:

*Participants began to get a taste of Detroit's Just Transition which includes: fighting extreme energy (Marathon oil refinery, tar sands expansion, pet coke piles along Detroit river, incinerator), advocating against privatization and protecting the public commons (water crisis, transportation, public financing of private corporations, emergency management and electoral democracy) while building community resilience (1000+ urban farms and gardens, youth leadership from front line communities, solar powered street lights, bike collectives, food hubs, markets and co-ops).*²⁶

EMEAC continues to explore ways to link their local struggles and strategies to the larger climate justice movement. For example, their Water Affordability Plan and their experiences fighting water privatization is a model they hope to share with others and perhaps get adopted nationally.²⁷

²⁵ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

²⁶ EMEAC Website, <http://www.emeac.org/2013/02/climate-justice-alignment-coalition.html>

²⁷ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

KENTUCKIANS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH (KFTC)



Mission, Structure, and History

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) was formed in the early 1980s by concerned citizens of Kentucky organizing around reforming state tax laws to force coal companies to pay property taxes on their land holdings. From their inception, the organization has been committed to direct action organizing and to challenging the most powerful industries and political interests in the state. Today KFTC is a grassroots, non profit organization with over 9,000 members with local chapters and at large members from around the state. KFTC is focused on shifting the economic, environmental and political status quo in a state that is dominated by the coal industry. They describe some of their primary goals:

*"[We want to] address the problems caused by coal mining and its effects on our water, air, land and people; **make a transition to cleaner and safer forms of energy that create new jobs and respect our resources; reform our tax structure** so it's fair and supports quality schools, healthy and safe communities, and an effective state government; restore voting rights and enable all Kentuckians to participate in our democracy; choose better leaders who represent ordinary people instead of powerful interests."*²⁸

KFTC's organizational structure mirrors their values and vision of a more inclusive, just and democratic society. They are structured as a membership organization with local chapters and are governed by a Steering Committee made up of elected representatives. The organization also has a statewide committee with members from across the state that weighs in on the organization's platforms and campaigns. They encourage and train their members to be actively engaged in the governance of the organization through local chapters and committees. Their mission describes this challenge: *"[We are] working for a new balance of power and a just society. As we work together we build our strength, individually and as a group, and we find solutions to real life problems. We use direct action to challenge – and change – unfair political, economic and social systems. **Our membership is open to all people who are committed to equality, democracy and non-violent change.**"*²⁹

Location and Geographic Focus

While KFTC's main office is located in London, Kentucky, they have field offices located throughout the state in Berea, Bowling Green, Lexington, Louisville, Covington, Prestonsburg, and Whitesburg. They have 13 local chapters across various counties where members and chapters can form when a group of 15 or more members want to become a formal part of KFTC. Although historically KFTC focused much of

²⁸ <https://www.kftc.org/about-us>

²⁹ <https://www.kftc.org/about-us/mission-vision>

their work in rural counties, their efforts have expanded to cities like Louisville and many of their campaigns are statewide.

Strategies for Change

KFTC believes in the power of community organizing to help shape state policy and influence the decision making process that affects the lives of Kentuckians. KFTC uses a range of strategies to achieve their organizing goals, including strategic communications, voter empowerment, non-violent direct action (ranging from letter writing to lobbying to protests and demonstrations), chapter building, grassroots fundraising, alliance building and litigation. Their approach to achieving a more just, democratic and sustainable economy is rooted in community organizing, which they build by developing relationships with a diversity of residents throughout Kentucky. They also invest in leadership development as a key way to empower local residents and build real grassroots power which they then incorporate into their own organizational structure.

Key Initiative & Projects

KFTC focuses on four core issue areas:

1. [Coal and Water](#) (Mountaintop Removal, Coal Ash, mine safety, etc.)
2. [Economic Justice](#) (Tax reform, immigrant rights, payday lending, etc.)
3. [New Energy & Transition](#) (Appalachian Transition, Renew East Kentucky, Sustainable Energy)
4. [Voting Rights](#) (KY Voting Rights Amendment, Restore Your Right to Vote, Former Felon Voices)

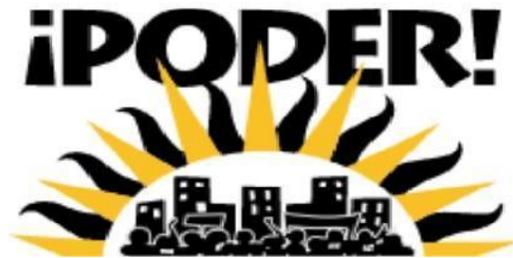
Reflections from the Field

For KFTC organizing strategies are a long-term approach that should focus on building and exercising power, especially among people affected by injustice, to improve the quality of life for all. As KFTC continues to grow, the leadership believes that it is important to continuously reevaluate their organizing strategies. Sara Pennington, the New Energy and Transition Campaign Organizer at KFTC states, ***“KFTC is a learning organization. We are a place that believes ordinary people can do extraordinary things.”***³⁰ Through community organizing, KFTC engages in relationship building and network expansion with a diverse mix of members who are committed to:

- Addressing the problems caused by coal mining and its effect on water, air, land, and people
- Demanding clean, safe, and alternative energy solutions that generate jobs and respects nature
- Reforming the current tax structure so that it is fair and enhances healthy and safe quality of life
- Restoring voters’ rights and enabling Kentuckians be able to participate in a peaceful democracy
- Electing better leaders who represent ordinary people instead of powerful interests

³⁰ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015

PEOPLE ORGANIZING TO DEMAND ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS (PODER)



Mission, Structure, and History

People Organized to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER) was founded in 1991 as a non-profit organization focused on achieving environmental justice. Since then, PODER has worked on improving the quality of life and well being of Latino immigrants and low-income communities of color in San Francisco. PODER's mission is "to organize with Latino immigrant families and youth to put into practice people-powered solutions that are locally-based, community led and environmentally just. **We nurture everyday people's leadership, regenerate culture, and build community power.**"³¹ They envision a society where people can coexist fruitfully together or *convivir conjuntamente*. PODER has a long history of community led environmental justice activism in San Francisco. The organization has a diverse board and staff reflective of the communities they organize in the city.

Location and Geographic Focus

PODER has offices in San Francisco, where their efforts focus mainly on the low-income, communities of color in the Mission and Excelsior districts. PODER links its grassroots work in San Francisco's largely Latino neighborhoods to citywide, regional and national movements aligned with their mission. Much of their policy and planning activities target the City of San Francisco although they work with partners at the state and national level to advance climate justice issues.

Strategies for Change

PODER organizes local residents in efforts to reclaim public resources and create economic and housing opportunities while also nurturing a new generation of grassroots leadership. Antonio Diaz, PODER's Organizational Director states: "**PODER takes direct action through grassroots organizing and forges alliances to achieve transformational change.**"³² He stresses that, "*the goal for neighborhoods like Mission and Excelsior is that they achieve a Just Transition towards building healthy communities.*"³³ To foster strategic change, PODER takes on a variety of interrelated issues including urban land access, namely development rights for affordable housing and public parks, immigrant rights, youth and economic empowerment, as well as civic engagement at a time when low-income communities are struggling to remain a vibrant part of San Francisco. PODER is currently testing models of economic and

³¹ PODER Website, <http://www.podersf.org/about/mission/>

³² Antonio Diaz. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Interview, June 29, 2015

³³ Ibid.

political empowerment for a Just Transition in one of the most rapidly gentrifying metropolitan areas in the US.

Key Initiatives & Projects

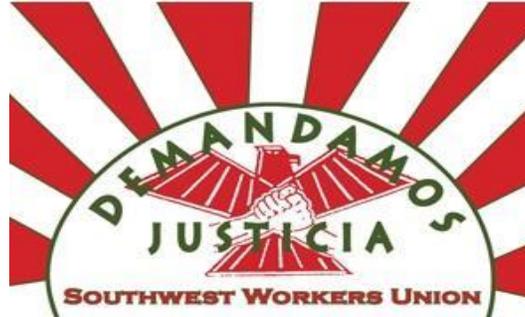
- [Youth Empowerment](#) (Common Roots, Urban Campesinos, etc.)
- [Civic Engagement](#) (“Know Your Rights” campaign, Language Access Network, *iPa’ Mi Comunidad Latina: Yo Voy a Votar!*)
- [Land Use Program](#) (PUEBLOTE campaign, Affordable Housing and Parks Project, etc.)
- [Green Economy](#) (Worker or community cooperatives and social enterprises)

Reflections from the Field

Although San Francisco is known as a progressive and sustainable city, not all of its residents reap the benefits of this reputation. Access to land in this densely developed city is one of the most significant challenges facing the area’s low-income residents. Gentrification and displacement are a primary concern for many residents in the Mission District, where 39 percent of the population is comprised of immigrant Latino families who often face precarious working and living conditions. PODER continues to empower residents to challenge the powerful real estate market and fight for their place in the city. Diaz considers how to face such challenging circumstances and he suggests that organizations like PODER have to be forward thinking and proactive to build spaces for low income, communities of color to endure, “*..we have to work against the bad but also bring in the good.*”³⁴

³⁴ Antonio Diaz. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Interview, June 29, 2015

SOUTHWEST WORKERS UNION (SWU)



Mission, Structure, and History

The Southwest Workers Union (SWU) was founded in 1988 in the small town of Hondo, Texas to organize low wage, public school workers who were stripped of collective bargaining rights by the state. Today, SWU is a non profit organization that focuses on worker rights, and fights for improved quality of life and living wages for low-wage workers in the San Antonio region. SWU's mission is, *"to build multi-generational grassroots power to create sustainable systemic change for social, economic, and environmental justice and to build the movement for dignity and justice."*³⁵ Texas is a hub for the fossil fuel industry, with refineries and extraction activities concentrated in many of the state's poorest communities of color. SWU has a long history of addressing these environmental injustices, from the Kelley Air Force Base clean-up to the City of San Antonio's attempts to build a nuclear power plant. These local struggles inform SWU's climate justice platform which they define as, *"a movement from the grassroots to realize solutions to our climate and energy problems that ensure the right of all people to live, work, play, and pray in safe, healthy, and clean environments. We envision a Just Transition to a future free from fossils fuels that protects the most vulnerable from the impacts of climate change."*³⁶

Over the years, SWU has evolved into an organization that tackles a wide range of issues beyond public school workers' rights. They now serve as a conduit to help voice the concerns of all members of working-class Latino communities in the region and promote direct action as a means to achieving social change. Arturo Trejo, a CJA fellow with SWU talks about the focus of their work, *"Southwest Workers Union is a union that is here to represent, to stand, to advocate, and to work on issues of the working class, low-income, especially with families, single parents, workers, youth, elders, LGBTQIA groups..."*³⁷ SWU is a membership based organization with almost 4,000 members, comprised mostly of low-income workers and their families in the San Antonio region. SWU has a membership board from which the executive board of directors is elected and many local workers and leaders are represented in their board and staff.

³⁵ SWU Website, <http://swunion.org/mission.html>

³⁶ SWU Website, <http://swunion.org/energy.html>

³⁷ Arturo Trejo. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 20, 2015

Location and Geographic Focus

Although SWU maintains close ties to Hondo, Texas and the Hondo Empowerment Committee, the organization bases its operations in San Antonio where they organize in five districts. SWU also organizes in Austin, and in one district in the border region – all areas with a large numbers of immigrant, low wage workers.

Strategies for Change

SWU is committed to advancing a green economy through movement building, organizing and community projects that empower the most impacted people. SWU's strategies for change include grassroots organizing for workers' rights, border and migrant rights, economic justice, and environmental justice. They also dedicate resources to youth empowerment and leadership development in efforts to build a larger movement for environmental and climate justice. SWU also offers community centers, gardens, and training workshops for their members and community residents in the San Antonio region. They partner with networks across the state, region and the nation to promote climate and environmental justice and worker rights issues.

Key Initiatives & Projects

- [Border and Migrant Rights](#) advocacy
- [Economic Justice](#) (living wage, organizing school workers, ratepayers union, green cooperatives)
- [Environmental Justice](#) (i.e. Kelly Air Force Base campaign,)
- [Youth Empowerment](#) (i.e. Youth Leadership Organization Program)
- [Leadership Development](#) (Nuestra Voz, Organizing for Justice, etc)
- [Movement Building](#) (i.e. Hondo Empowerment Committee, People's Power Plan Coalition)

Reflection from the Field

SWU is committed to nurturing leaders and inspiring community self-determination through proactive projects that local residents can control and benefit from, “...we are looking into how to develop community spaces where people shop, work and live within their communities, and avoid being displaced.”³⁸ These projects reflect their vision of a Just Transition, “**one of the pieces that is connected to our larger vision around movement is leadership transition and the understanding that we speak for ourselves.**”³⁹ For SWU, leadership is not reserved for one person, but is for everyone in the community. Leadership development within the organization is meant to empower members to take on the challenges and acquire the skills necessary to create meaningful change in their communities from the ground up.

³⁸ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 7, 2015

³⁹ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 7, 2015

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE GROUND UP

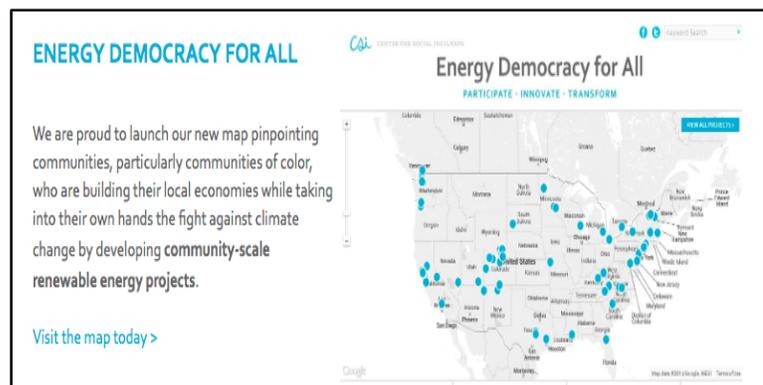
- a. Energy Democracy
- b. Land Use Control and Planning
- c. Political & Cultural Organizing
- d. Democratic Practices

ENERGY DEMOCRACY

Energy democracy is a relatively new concept that is gaining increased attention from grassroots environmental justice and climate activists. The concept of energy democracy expands the vision of a transition to a fossil free economy by highlighting the need for a fundamental shift in the structure of the existing energy industry.⁴⁰ Currently, the energy sector in the United States is dominated by a model of energy production and distribution that is highly centralized and owned by large, private utility industries. When climate change activists advocate for the transition to a fossil fuel free future they often focus on the transformation of the sources of energy production such as a transition from coal and natural gas to solar and wind generation. But this vision leaves unanswered the question of who owns, transmits and ultimately controls the location and price of these new energy sources.

Energy democracy proposes a new relationship to energy systems that speaks not just to the sources of energy but to the processes and structures by which that power is distributed and owned. The vision of energy democracy is one in which there is a publicly engaged process that involves the decentralization of current energy systems with energy efficiency and renewable energy innovations, building resiliency through the development of local energy production, distribution and consumption through community partnerships and ownership.

The Center for Social Inclusion (CSI) defines energy democracy as the state in which community residents are the innovators, planners, and decision-makers determining how to use and create energy that is local and renewable.⁴¹ Anthony Giancattarino, Director of Policy and Strategy at CSI, defines energy democracy as a transition from energy dependence on monopolized fossil fuel driven energy systems to community owned renewable energy systems.⁴² John Farrell, from the Institute for Local Self-Resilience further elaborates that while the 21st century electric utility already has incentives driving it toward a clean, efficient, flexible grid, in a true energy democracy, customers have the ability to exercise substantial decision-making power over their own and their community's energy economy.⁴³ Energy democracy, in essence, can make places environmentally healthier, reduce energy costs for low income families, help stem the tide of climate change and democratize the ownership and control over energy systems.



⁴⁰ Renewable Communities Website, <http://www.renewablecommunities.org/p/energy-democracy.html>

⁴¹ Center for Social Inclusion Website, <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/ideas/energy-democracy/>

⁴² Anthony Giancattarino. Center for Social Inclusion. Interview, June 29, 2015

⁴³ John Farrell, *Beyond Utility 2.0 to Energy Democracy* <https://ilsr.org/beyond-utility-2-0-part-1-prelude/>

Energy democracy then becomes an essential component of achieving the vision of a Just Transition in which communities break from existing models of environmental and economic exploitation and forge new pathways to economic empowerment and climate resiliency. Climate and environmental justice communities on the frontlines continue to fight extractive and polluting oil and gas industries but are also finding ways to articulate and invest in alternatives. Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) and their *Our Power* pilot sites are committed to achieving energy democracy as part of the larger vision for a Just Transition within their own communities. Some of their joint efforts include organizing for energy policy reform, developing producer-consumer energy projects, renewable energy co-operatives, and community-owned utilities. Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) in California, and Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMWC) in Arizona are some of the groups that offer useful insights into strategies for supporting energy democracy in action.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) & Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)

APEN and CBE's organizing efforts in Richmond, California along with their statewide energy policy advocacy are structured to achieve energy democracy. Richmond is a focal point of decades of organizing to shut down one of the nation's largest and dirtiest oil refineries, Chevron. CBE's and APEN's experience of organizing local communities impacted by Chevron proved to be a valuable testing ground for linking the issues of energy systems, economic opportunities and environmental conditions. Vivian Huang of APEN suggests that *"the long term work with Chevron [in Richmond] has been especially important as this has made it possible to push the needle of the political dynamics when it comes to energy generation and distribution at the local and state levels."*⁴⁴ Some of APEN and CBE's most effective tactics in fighting the Chevron plant have included the use of legal and scientific research, statewide policy reforms, and organizing a broad base of local residents to participate and shape their campaigns. APEN and CBE believe that to free Richmond from Chevron's economic grasp, the expansion of renewable energy projects and policies are necessary as a way to stimulate clean energy jobs and provide a new vision for local economic development.

APEN, like CBE, is also focused on policy initiatives at the local and state level that can support energy democracy goals. APEN and CBE supported the passage of Assembly Bill 117 in 2002 to establish Community Choice Aggregation, which offers an opportunity for Californians to choose their electric provider and the source of their electricity. In 2013, the city of Richmond no longer purchased their electricity from the corporate utility Pacific Gas and Electric, but rather from Marin Clean Energy (MCE). MCE is a public agency and not-for-profit provider that gives customers the choice of having 50-100% of their electricity supply be sourced from renewable energy sources at competitive rates.

APEN and CBE are also active in building partnerships with labor groups to ensure that the promise of new energy sources also translates into economic opportunities and access for workers and residents on the frontlines of these industries. They along with many other CJA member organizations promote policies that incentivize local production and sourcing of energy efficiency and renewable energy manufacturing, installation and maintenance jobs in places like Richmond. Andrés Soto, CBE's organizer

⁴⁴ Vivian Yi Huang. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, June 22, 2015

in Richmond, believes that *“if a refinery is going to be decommissioned, then there must appropriate cleanup strategies as well opportunities for workers who have worked in this industry to be able to transition to a job creating economy.”*⁴⁵ Renewable energy is aggregated publicly and can create tremendous employment opportunities for those who have been left out of the traditional fossil fuel economy, particularly low-income, people of color in the city of Richmond. Mari Rose Taruc from APEN states: *“Richmond residents, particularly those who have been unemployed, for example, could be part of installing the solar projects in Richmond, so that companies such as Marin Clean Energy can offer the community clean energy products on site.”*⁴⁶

APEN, CBE, and their partners were also weighed in on the state’s energy plan, specifically calling for solar policies that support economic development and green job growth. But there is still a long road towards achieving energy democracy. Although efforts to curb and control Chevron's operations in Richmond have succeeded, the plant continues to operate and pollute the community. Shutting down Chevron and refineries like it around the country it will take coordinated efforts at the local, state, national and international levels. Bahram Fazeli, Director of Research at CBE thinks that the next step requires the *“creation of practical and tangible models that can be replicated all over the country.”*⁴⁷ For APEN and CBE, Richmond is ground zero for experimenting with models of energy democracy.

Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMWC)

The Black Mesa region is home to the Navajo and Hopi Indigenous people. This sacred place also hosts two coal mines operated by the Peabody Coal Company – the Black Mesa Mine and the Kayenta Mine. Coal mining operations run by Peabody have severely affected the community’s environment, water, and health. Partially in response to these burdens and the historic legacy of coal mining in native communities, the Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMCW) has committed to working on energy democracy. They take a proactive and holistic approach to energy development that considers community participation and benefits, job training, environmental impacts and local control. Jihan Gearon, Executive Director of BMCW explains:

*BMCW has been doing a lot of work trying to figure out what ways can we diversify the local economy and **transition away from this extractive economy to something that is more culturally based, more sustainable, ecologically restorative, and that is also determined and controlled and managed by our local community.***⁴⁸

BMCW continues to organize for the permanent closure and clean up of the coal mines in the Black Mesa region and also to replace the coal-fired power plants fed by the Black Mesa mines with renewable energy projects. BMCW is developing a replicable and scalable community owned solar project including a plan to install a series of 20 MW to 200 MW solar arrays in the areas of abandoned coal mines of the Black Mesa region. These arrays would be owned collectively and benefit the local Hopi and Navajo communities, many of whom do not currently enjoy access to electricity from the grid.

⁴⁵ Andrés Soto. Communities for Better Environment. Interview, July 20, 2015

⁴⁶ Mari Rose Taruc. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, July 15, 2015

⁴⁷ Bahram Fazeli. Communities for a Better Environment. Interview, July 7, 2015

⁴⁸ Jihan Gearson. Black Mesa Water Coalition. Interview, July 22, 2015

BMCW is seeking to implement this vision despite a lack of support from the local tribal government to secure land rights for the implementation of the project. To increase pressure on the local government, BMCW is introducing chapter resolutions to the tribal government and is reaching out to local stakeholders such as hospitals, schools, and community groups to advocate for the leasing of space on their properties to be part of the solar generation project. A local school recently agreed to support them. The Navajo Utility Authority, who acts as an intermediary between electricity producers and the Navajo people, has also recently signaled support for the solar project. Support from these local institutions for solar installations, places added pressure on tribal governments to eventually expand installation to the abandoned coal mines.

Many of the CJA member organizations are targeting the energy sector as a fruitful and necessary starting point for making a Just Transition. While many of these energy related projects are relatively small or in the planning stages, collectively they represent hopeful first steps in moving towards more widespread adoption and shifting to a more decentralized, democratic and sustainable relationship of communities to energy systems. The public policy advocacy around energy democracy related proposals has been quite robust in the last several years with states like California as well as local governments adopting more aggressive renewable energy goals that include cooperative energy utilities, decentralization of the energy grid and alternative models of power purchasing. The *Our Power* organizations are primed for taking action to implement energy democracy projects. They

Resources

1. Center for Social Inclusion
[Energy Democracy: Community Led Solutions Report](#)
Anthony Giancatarino
2. Institute for Local Self Reliance
[Renewable Energy and Energy Democracy Research](#)
John Farrell
3. Center for Earth, Energy & Democracy
[Climate & Energy Research](#)
Dr. Cecilia Martinez
4. [Renewable Communities](#)
Complete Listing of reports, studies and videos on Energy Democracy

LAND USE CONTROL AND PLANNING

Control of land is one of the principle mechanisms in which capital accumulates and political and economic power are determined. The contested terrain of land use control, planning and development is intimately linked to environmental injustice and economic development. For indigenous communities, communities of color and low-income communities in both rural and urban contexts, the conflicts over land use and access to the development process are deep expressions of the political and economic power that often marginalize communities and leave them vulnerable to the ravages of environmental pollution, gentrification and displacement. Thus struggles for land use control are an integral part of securing a proactive vision of a Just Transition. In efforts to secure local living economies, experiment with new cooperative models of development and energy production and distribution systems, land is often an essential ingredient. It then makes sense that this is an area of intense focus for many of the Our Power communities as they seek to secure new pathways for economic and environmental justice.

Every community faces different conditions on the ground that shape their approach and priorities with respect to land use. Many environmental justice organizations have a long history of responding to gentrification, poor housing conditions and the rights of tenants, reclaiming public spaces, or fighting new development proposals to locate polluting industries in their neighborhoods. The strategies to address land use goes hand in hand with a vision of a Just Transition and for many of the pilot organizations in this study it is a central area of organizing. Cooperation Jackson and PODER's efforts are just a few examples of organizations focused on proactive and just land use planning.

Cooperation Jackson

It is estimated that 41 percent of land parcels in West Jackson, Mississippi are vacant and underutilized.⁴⁹ The area is characterized by renter-occupied, residential housing in a scattered urban landscape that is home to a historically African American community. The widespread land vacancy has attracted the attention of real estate and private for-profit companies from outside the area that threaten to take over land development processes and potentially catalyze gentrification. Brandon King of Cooperation Jackson describes Jackson as a "plantation town" because so much of the land is controlled by white, wealthy owners and developers outside of the city. Recently, the nearby university and medical center have expressed interest in real estate development in this area of Jackson as a means of "revitalization". This type of top down redevelopment typically leads to gentrification and displacement because there are few ties to local residents in the form of housing or employment opportunities. These dynamics are why so much of Cooperation Jackson's focus has been on first gaining control over local land to begin the process of regenerating their local economy and cleaning up the devastation left in the wake of deindustrialization.

Cooperation Jackson was born out of a larger planning effort that laid out the community's vision of a new system of land use development and control. This vision was detailed in the, "[*Jackson-Kush Plan*](#),

⁴⁹Duvall Decker Architects, P.A. (2014), *West Jackson Planning Guidebook*. Jackson, Mississippi. <https://westjackson.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/west-jackson-planning-guidebook-final-1.pdf>

"[that] puts forth a bold agenda to create jobs with rights, dignity, and justice that generate wealth and distribute it equitably based on the principles of cooperation, sharing, solidarity, and democracy."⁵⁰

Contained within this plan is a clear set of principles about the mechanisms of land use control that will lay the foundation for a more equitable and sustainable future for Jackson.

On the basis of this plan, Cooperation Jackson launched the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI), which entails establishing a Community Land Trust, a Community Development Corporation and an "Eco-Village" with a housing cooperative among other cooperatives they hope to establish in Jackson. Cooperation Jackson recently purchased land to take it out of the private real estate market and develop it for the benefit of the community. The staff has also undergone trainings with the [National Community Land Trust Network](#) to gain more in-house expertise on how to establish and sustain land trusts. This model can serve as a powerful mechanism for preserving the affordability of land in perpetuity and supporting local control over the real estate market. The first phase of the SCI project would be to create an Urban Freedom Farm, building greenhouses out of existing structures on the land. This initiative seeks to alleviate the lack of affordable, healthy food in the neighborhood while contributing to the local economy. The second phase of the SCI will consist of establishing an "eco-village" with a housing cooperative to ensure quality affordable housing and rent for the working class. Today, most of the residents of Jackson are renters with little control over their housing conditions and the larger land use patterns shaping their communities. Access to affordable housing and fresh, healthy food are two essential ingredients in developing a more sustainable community. But this plan is even more transformative in that it changes the very structure of land use control in perpetuity and puts it into the hands of local residents. Cooperation Jackson's vision of collective land use control offers up a more inclusive and grassroots approach to revitalization grounded in the assets already present in the community.

PODER

PODER's approach to land use has been shaped by the rapid gentrification via rampant real estate speculation in the city of San Francisco. A headline from the New York Times article in May of 2015 describes the dire situation, "*Gentrification Spreads an Upheaval in San Francisco's Mission District*".⁵¹ After the the dot-com boom hit the region, the Mission District along with many other parts of the city became prime targets for rising rents and luxury developments. PODER saw a rapid transformation of the demographics of their communities with both gentrification and displacement occurring at alarming levels.⁵² Many of the low and middle-income, African American, Latino and Asian residents were facing evictions or finding it difficult to remain in communities where they had established businesses and homes. PODER has responded proactively not just through organizing tenants and mobilizing elected officials but by getting deeply familiar with the local land use and zoning processes that are helping to fuel land speculation. In addition to educating local residents about the land use process, they have

⁵⁰ Cooperation Jackson Website, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/story/>

⁵¹ Carl Pogash. May 22, 2015. [Gentrification Spreads an Upheaval in San Francisco's Mission District](#). NY Times

⁵² Definition of gentrification as a demographic or physical change, such as a rise in wealthier residents or in neighborhood investment and displacement is defined as a loss of low-income residents. <http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/wp2015-05.pdf>

taken on the task of developing their own vision and plan for the development of their community in more inclusive and just ways.

The People's Plan came out of an effort by PODER to identify the top needs for the community which included (1) affordable housing, (2) access to parks and (3) access to jobs. The Plan called for the reclamation of local land to become public land either in the form of parks or developments that were inclusive in terms of affordable housing or locally supported businesses. It also sought rezoning to protect public lands and existing inclusive uses from speculation or up-zoning. Through this effort, they managed to introduce some of their recommendations in the [Eastern Neighborhoods Plan](#) of the city. This long term, proactive planning effort together with political organizing, led to the development of three affordable housing projects. They have also successfully secured land to restore and build new parks and urban gardens as well as an urban farm in the area.⁵³ ***"Our orientation has been to work for public sites to be used for neighborhood priorities as an example of the kind of transition work that needs to happen to foster healthy, thriving, sustainable, resilient neighborhoods"***⁵⁴ says Antonio Diaz, of PODER.

PODER's challenge has also been to build a powerful base of local constituents that can hold elected officials accountable for the kinds of redevelopment priorities that will be pursued in a rapidly transforming city. This is a difficult challenge, however, as so many of their constituents are being forced out of the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the organization has continued to be politically active, securing supportive local council people to help in their fight against displacement as well as for the kinds of inclusive developments PODER seeks. The fight over land is a central struggle that will continue to fuel PODER's local efforts towards a Just Transition. PODER is reclaiming their place in the urban fabric and redefining what it means to be a truly progressive city. *"The Mission is ground zero for the fight for the future of San Francisco," says David Campos, the city supervisor who represents most of the nearly two-square-mile district.*⁵⁵

RESOURCES

1. [National Community Land Trust Network](#)
2. [Jackson-Kush Plan](#)
3. [Green Zones](#)

⁵³ Antonio Diaz. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Interview, June 29, 2015

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Carl Pogash. May 22, 2015. [Gentrification Spreads an Upheaval in San Francisco's Mission District](#). NY Times

POLITICAL & CULTURAL ORGANIZING

The Climate Justice Alliance member organizations all have a commitment to environmental justice grounded in communities empowered to "speak for themselves". This central tenant of the environmental justice movement is intimately linked to community organizing as a strategy for empowerment and giving voice to the most impacted people. All the *Our Power* pilot communities included in this study use organizing as a tool to achieve their missions and many of them have explicit organizing goals tied to political and cultural conditions on the ground. The use of organizing is not a new technique for grassroots groups but many of these organizations have found innovative and effective means of organizing to realize climate justice beyond their local communities and ultimately contribute to building a "movement of movements". Movement building is a necessary part of achieving the global vision of climate justice in which disparate, vulnerable communities around the globe can unite to confront powerful global forces that are the root of many of the economic and environmental struggles faced by environmental justice communities. Diana Lopez of SWU reflects on the power of building a movement from the grassroots:

"Movements that are led by one person or by a few people aren't necessarily changing a system - It is continuing that system and that idea that one person, a few people, lead the majority of the world is part of the problem."⁵⁶

Beyond contributing to movement building, political and cultural organizing in communities of color and low-income communities also helps realize the very important aspect of justice focused on recognition. David Schlosberg reminds us that environmental justice cannot be achieved simply through a just distribution of environmental burdens and benefits but requires tackling cultural and institutional forms of injustice, ***"In confronting the injustices of cultural domination, non recognition and lack of respect, various movements focus on remedies based in cultural, symbolic and, ultimately, institutional change."***⁵⁷ Thus organizing serves as a vehicle for linking local residents to transformative changes in their communities and to broader social justice goals beyond their local communities. Organizing is the foundation for building the power of communities to foment change from the ground up. Brandon King of Cooperation Jackson reflects on the power of building a movement with CJA: ***"Being members of the Climate Justice Alliance has allowed us to engage in a process where we are learning to act in solidarity with other frontline communities who have been the most impacted by the climate crisis."***⁵⁸ Included here are just a few examples of the creative and powerful ways that some of the organizations in CJA are using organizing to build their power and a broader movement for climate justice.

East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC)

East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) has developed a model of cultural organizing that is intimately tied to the communities they serve in Detroit. In 2014, EMEAC explicitly incorporated into their organization's practices what they call "cross-cultural organizing". Cross-cultural organizing is seen

⁵⁶ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union, Interview, July 7, 2015

⁵⁷ Scholsberg, D. The Justice of Environmental Justice: Reconciling Equity, Recognition and Participation in a Political Movement. p.83

⁵⁸ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson. Interview, July 17, 2015

as key to building a grassroots movement because it is inclusionary, visionary, and inspires people from diverse backgrounds to find common cause. EMEAC has found cross-cultural organizing is particularly effective in mobilizing youth and in nurturing young people to assume leadership positions in their communities and within EMEAC. One way that EMEAC nurtures cross-cultural organizing efforts is through the use of arts and entertainment, performance and popular culture to mobilize local youth. *"We operate under a framework of entertainment justice"* states Copeland who suggests that the use of social media, popular culture and performance can be used to craft positive self image and inspire creativity, consciousness raising, and solidarity for young people who are often bombarded with negative images of themselves and of their community in mainstream society.⁵⁹ Young people in EMEAC are encouraged to use film, music, performance, and social media to express themselves, make calls to action, and help mobilize and inspire other young people and community members to be active, engaged citizens of Detroit. It also becomes an outlet for demonstrating the rich cultural traditions and talent that is often overlooked in their communities.

Detroit is also home to a rich legacy of Black cultural and political organizing. EMEAC taps into this history as another outlet for cultural organizing across Black communities in Detroit and beyond. William Copeland of EMEAC reflects on the importance of this strategy, *"Our story is an important aspect of the Black experience in America. We think it is important to have Black organizing and people of color's faces prominent in the movement..."*⁶⁰ EMEAC is exploring how cultural organizing can lift up and empower communities through campaigns targeting the expression of Black and Latino cultures, including:

- Creating programs that build relationships between Detroit's Black and Latino communities
- Launching the *Up South/Down South Initiative*, which links together Black communities from southern and northern states including communities in Michigan, Georgia, Louisiana, and Alabama.

These cultural organizing strategies are powerful tools in building a movement that inspires a new generation of young people to transform their communities and the larger society through an affirmative articulation of their cultural and racial identities.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) & Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)

California-based APEN and CBE both employ political and cultural organizing practices that have successfully transformed local and statewide conditions in their respective communities. Both organizations have extensive experience organizing campaigns that have reshaped the local leadership of city councils. In Richmond and Oakland California they used political organizing to mobilize local residents not just during elections but throughout the political process. Through organizing, these groups were able to build relationships with local elected officials and also hold their local elected leaders accountable with respect to key issues impacting the community.

This type of proactive, political organizing is key to advocating public policies that threaten powerful industries, which tend to dominate political agendas. APEN and CBE's, organizing efforts in Richmond

⁵⁹ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

⁶⁰ Ibid.

California are examples of effective political organizing towards a Just Transition. Organizing of local residents in Richmond was essential to developing political alliances that would support efforts to curb Chevron's activities and also create alternative programs to transition the local economy away from reliance on Chevron. APEN and CBE have been particularly successful at building power among people of color and low-income people through the promotion of voting rights in communities that have historically had low voter registration levels and poor turnouts, and thus weak levels of political representation locally and statewide. Both organizations have voter rights campaigns that target underrepresented communities so that they can better exert their electoral power in key decision-making and political processes – events that ultimately impact their environmental and economic conditions.

APEN and CBE are also creating outreach materials that educate people from diverse backgrounds on issues of climate, energy and environmental justice. Vivian Huang from APEN talks about the importance of communicating with communities that are marginalized from the political process, "***At APEN we are really trying to create hope through the vision of our work as we need to change the story.***"⁶¹ Through a dissemination of information about voting rights, new models for economic and environmental development, and the role of government these organizations hope to empower residents to keep local officials accountable for the decisions they make and develop leadership that supports more sustainable and just policies.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC)

The heart of KFTC's mission speaks to the power of organizing for a more just society:

"Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is a community of people, inspired by a vision, building New Power and a better future for all of us. Together we organize for a fair economy, a healthy environment, new safe energy and an honest democracy."⁶²

Through their extensive membership network, KFTC has established a strong foundation built on political organizing across the state of Kentucky. However, the organization operates in a difficult political environment that is often hostile to their campaigns and where the political establishment is dominated by the coal industry they are fighting hard to replace. These industry and political ties are so deeply entrenched that the elected representatives are often referred to as "coal boys". Sara Pennington reflects on the difficulties of introducing energy efficiency or renewable energy policies in the statehouse when many of the legislators refused to hear the bills, "***The first time these bills were introduced legislators wouldn't even stay in the room for a hearing – but now they are entertaining discussion on bills – talking about possibilities for renewables and energy efficiency programs.***"⁶³ Today Pennington says state representatives and reluctant former coal communities are more receptive to listen to proposals about energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. The organization has managed to introduce modest energy efficiency programs with partner groups like the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development [MACED](#) in local towns where coal was once the only imagined possibility.

⁶¹ Vivian Yi Huang. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, June 22, 2015

⁶² KFTC Website, <https://www.kftc.org>

⁶³ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015

They have also advocated for state and national policies like the Kentucky Coal Severance Tax Reform and the [Kentucky Clean Energy Opportunity Act](#) that seek to target resources to help transition coal dominated towns to more sustainable alternatives. These efforts begin small but can have dramatic impacts in terms of inspiring broader change.

*Bentham Saves is a program that is not yet launched but started to work with a very small municipality (500 people) to work with the municipal owned utility – to create a fund that can capitalize energy efficiency upgrades for residents for free using local workers. This program is framed by KFCC members as an example of Just Transition work. This is a town that was 100 % coal – **everyone in the town had ties to coal and today the narrative has completely changed and everyone there is so excited about renewable energy and energy efficiency** – its been a sea change⁶⁴*

These gains are largely due to the grassroots organizing done by local chapters in communities throughout Kentucky.

Some of the first political organizing campaigns that local chapters undertook involved democratizing local rural energy cooperatives in the state. These cooperatives were set up to provide cheap energy to remote rural towns and primarily relied on coal plants and local residents to run the cooperatives. The charters for many of these local cooperatives were supposed to be accountable with elected representatives, open meetings, and transparent processes but over time they came to be dominated by a handful of people tied to the coal industry. KFTC members successfully campaigned to open up some of these rural cooperatives to more democratic practices, running their own candidates for positions within cooperative boards and advocating for cleaner alternatives to coal. These very localized organizing efforts are just one example of how KFTC is leveraging political organizing strategies to transform their local economies and build a movement for a more democratic society.

Southwest Workers Union (SWU)

Southwest Workers Union (SWU) was founded on organizing principles and strategies. Although the organization began as an organizing effort for public school workers, their mission today goes far beyond labor issues and public school workers. They explicitly seek to build power through organizing in their local communities and through alliances with aligned organizations for movement building beyond Texas. *"SWU considers building links between organizations as critical to increase the power of social justice movements, share strategies to improve effectiveness and uplift a collective struggle. Anchored in local struggles, SWU recognized the strategic importance of connecting to the global movement."*⁶⁵

One of SWU's most effective practices is organizing and training youth through their Youth Leadership Organization. Similar to EMEAC's efforts in Detroit, SWU is dedicated to creating a base of organizers who are trained to be politically engaged and conversant in community resilience and sustainable economic issues. Youth gain useful skills in the areas of energy, education, gardening, printmaking, and small business development. Arturo Trejo reflects on SWU's commitment to investing in youth organizing. *"Intentionally we have youth organizers and a year round youth program. We are hiring,*

⁶⁴ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015.

⁶⁵ SWU Website, <http://swunion.org/movement.html>

*mentoring, and developing organizers on a year round basis".*⁶⁶ What may seem like a typical youth program at first glance, is actually a radical approach to building power: *"The YLO developed from a framework of involving entire families and aims to strengthen the integration of youth and children into long-term organizing, intentionally engaging them in social justice issues within their community."*⁶⁷ SWU's organizing efforts are all part of their vision of a Just Transition that includes intergenerational organizing and the development of frontline leaders."⁶⁸

Resources

1. [Movement Generation](#)
2. [Just Transition Alliance](#)
3. [Grassroots Global Justice Alliance](#)

⁶⁶ Arturo Trejo. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 20, 2015,

⁶⁷ SWU Website, <http://swunion.org/youth.html>

⁶⁸ Ibid

DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

The organizations that make up the Climate Justice Alliance are exercising their power as agents of change working through civil society. As members of civil society, these groups have a clear articulation of how they contribute to, reflect and are constitutive of a democratic society. There are several channels through which civil society contributes to a healthy democracy. It controls and limits government power by subjecting it to public scrutiny, it creates alternative channels for articulation and representation of interests, it allows for the collective pursuit of citizens' values, and it recruits and trains new political leaders.⁶⁹ Beyond political leaders, civil society organizations are also committed to broad political participation and democratic practices that value social justice in its many forms. For low-income and communities of color that have a long history of colonization, oppression, exploitation and marginalization at the hands of political institutions, democracy is the primary means of realizing social justice as freedom from oppression, misrepresentation and material inequality.

Many of the organizations interviewed have missions and organizational strategies and tactics that incorporate democratic values. Sara Pennington from KFTC describes how her organization models the democratic ideals they espouse through their organizational structure, *"We are living our principles – we want to be really deeply democratic in our process – our process is part of our product"*⁷⁰ By structuring their organization in a democratic and participatory way, historically marginalized people are given a space to speak for themselves, and lead collective efforts to ensure their interests are considered and realized. Additionally, shared governance avoids divisive conflicts and enhances accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness and legitimacy of the outcomes. Therefore, decisions made through democratic processes more often have wide acceptance and support from constituencies and tend to better reflect the public interest. Finally, truly democratic practices contribute to the proliferation of new information and ideas that otherwise would go unrealized.⁷¹ Cooperation Jackson, SWU, and KFTC are a few of the examples of organizations engaged in the cultivation of democratic practices both within their organizations and in their communities that reflect a more just and sustainable model of governance they aspire to see in the larger society.

Cooperation Jackson

Jackson's former Mayor Lumumba advocated throughout his life for the people of Jackson to be in control of their own lives by fostering self-determination and participatory democracy. During his short time in office, Lumumba and his team focused on "democratizing American democracy". One of the ways they set out to achieve this vision was by hosting People's Assemblies where Jacksonians were able to engage with practices of self-governance. Today, Cooperation Jackson carries on this legacy of self-determination with its mission is to empower workers and residents by democratizing all the essential

⁶⁹ Fischer, Frank. *Citizens, experts, and the environment: The politics of local knowledge*. Duke University Press, 2000. p43

⁷⁰ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015.

⁷¹ Warleigh, A. (2002) *Europeanizing' Civil Society: NGOs as Agents of Political Socialization*. Journal of Common Market Studies, 2001, vol. 39, issue 4, pp 619-639

processes of production, distribution and consumption. They focus on the development of cooperatives, which are structured as democratically controlled enterprises.

The cooperative system is based upon the equality of member-workers or cooperators.

Aside from limited and special circumstances all workers must be members. The cooperative is democratically controlled on the basis of one member, one vote; its governing structures are democratically controlled and are also responsible to the general assembly or other elected body.⁷²

Southwest Workers Union

SWU is a membership-based and membership-led organization. Throughout their existence, they have gone through several leadership transitions because they understand that ***"movements led by one person or a few people aren't necessarily changing the system."***⁷³ Today, SWU has a board of members in each local and an executive board consisting of elected members. They hold membership assemblies once or twice a year that are equivalent to board meetings, where all members can participate. Through this process, they open up their decision-making processes and leadership to the interests and guidance of those members most directly impacted by conditions they hope to address. SWU also invests in building local leadership for democratic governance through a program called the *Organizing School of Justice*. The School focuses on educational opportunities outside the mainstream educational system, where grassroots leaders experience participatory popular political education centered on social justice themes. The ultimate goal of the School is to expose their membership to democratic skills, such as organizing, power analysis, planning and consensus building.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth

KFTC is founded on a vision of an "honest democracy" that is reflected in their organizational structure and core campaigns.

Our democracy works best when all people have access to good information and are able to participate in decisions affecting their lives and communities. KFTC members understand the importance of voting, and we also know that a healthy democracy requires so much more. A real, participatory democracy needs a well informed public, high levels of voter registration and participation, a real choice of candidates, meaningful ways for people to make their voices heard about important issues, and opportunities for people with good ideas and skills to run for, and win, public office.⁷⁴

KFTC's structure consists of more than 7,500 members across the state and is governed by an elected Steering Committee. In about a dozen places, KFTC members have organized to establish local chapters in their county or city, where representatives are elected. Additionally, there are statewide committees and governance committees that recommend and implement key parts of KFTC's campaigns. Across Kentucky, in statewide and local campaigns, hundreds of KFTC members are deeply engaged and actively participating in the political process. These leaders grow through skills training, mentoring, exchange with other groups and exposure to leadership roles within the organization. Their efforts to

⁷² Cooperation Jackson website. <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/principles/>

⁷³ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 7, 2015

⁷⁴ Kentuckian for the Commonwealth website. <https://www.kftc.org/voting-democracy>

expand their membership and Kentucky's voter base overall will lead to more accountable, responsive and honest governance that can meet the needs of the community in more just and sustainable ways.

Resources

1. Democracy Collaborative:
[Educate & Empower: Tools for Building Community Wealth](#)
2. [Deep Democracy is Not Meetings That Last Forever](#)
3. [Change Partnership](#)

REFLECTIONS ON THE ROAD TO A JUST TRANSITION

- a. A Vision for Just Transition
- b. Scaling Locally Grounded, Globally Linked Efforts
- c. Strategies for Measuring Success

A VISION FOR A JUST TRANSITION

One of the first usages of the term *Just Transition* can be found in the labor movement in reference to the relationship of labor to environmental protection. "*The real choice is not jobs or environment. It is both or neither.*"⁷⁵ With increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change on the economy, many in the labor movement and beyond began to explore the potential impacts on jobs, workers and industries that would inevitably occur. "*Worldwide, trade unions have developed a point of view on the issue that is encapsulated by the concept of 'Just Transition', the notion that the transition process to a greener economy has to be inclusive of all stakeholders, and that the unavoidable employment and social costs of the transition have to be shared by all. Because one thing is sure: if the transition to a greener economy generates employment, it will also entail job losses for some.*"⁷⁶

The transition implied in this term is a shift away from a fossil fuel intensive economy to a "greener" economy driven by a more sustainable energy sector. Beyond the energy sector, climate change will have differential impacts across broad swaths of the economy from agriculture to manufacturing. Although a Just Transition is often associated with "green jobs", envisioned as a transition of workers from coal mining to the installation of wind or solar farms, the term encompasses a more far-reaching process. This vision of transitioning existing workers into new or different sectors of the economy keeps the notion squarely within a traditional framework of a capitalist mode of production and labor model. Even when applied to the transition of unemployed or under-employed segments of the population who have traditionally been disenfranchised from the economy, green jobs still do not necessarily shift these labor relations. Steven Tufts suggests there are four versions of a Just Transition that have been articulated by different groups.⁷⁷ Each version can be considered top-down or bottom-up in nature.⁷⁸ Of these four options, the one most closely aligned with the *Our Power* communities' vision may be the "Organic Energy Democracy" version (Table 1). Those groups working at the intersection of the labor and the environmental justice movements have continued to evolve the meaning of the term:

*This new way of looking at economic systems also bridges the dialogue with labor groups, as labor unions were discussing worker ownership models and a new economy that is in line with communities building a more just society – through the creation of new means of production... The meaning of Just Transition needs to encompass this as well – not just what we identify [as] wrong with the current extractive systems of production but what we hope will replace these systems.*⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Kohler, B. 1998. *Just Transition – A labour view of Sustainable Development*, CEP Journal on-line, Summer, Vol. 6, No. 2, available at: http://oldsite.cep.ca/journal/1998_summer/9808just.html

⁷⁶ Cunniah, D. 2010. Climate Change and Labour: The Need for a "Just Transition". *International Journal of Labour Research*, Volume 2; Issue 2, p. 122

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_dialogue/@actrav/documents/publication/wcms_153352.pdf

⁷⁷ Tufts, Steven. 2011 Will the Right turn Green? *Climate and Capitalism*, <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2011/12/12/will-the-right-turn-green/>

⁷⁸ Ware, Michael. 2015. What Kind of "Just Transition"? *SocialistWorker.org*, <http://socialistworker.org/2015/12/01/what-kind-of-just-transition>

⁷⁹ Ananda Lee Tan, Interview, July 24, 2015

FOUR VERSIONS OF A JUST TRANSITION

Green Capitalism:

Based on the idea that the free market drives change under capitalism and will reward green innovation in developing renewable energy and greater efficiency in the use of fossil fuels.

State Centered Approach - "Green" New Deal

A rapid, top down transition, driven by international competition, climate disruption - this approach would mean low-wage, non-union job creation and hybrid state-corporate mega-projects, with no democratic control.

Organic Energy Democracy:

Envisions an evolving struggle in which working people are radicalized towards direct democracy; workers transition out of fossil-fuel jobs at the expense of the industry; prioritizes environmental justice globally;

Just Green Capitalism:

Green job creation and tougher measures like carbon taxes; Free market is more regulated, but still determines what goods & services are produced.

Today's environmental and climate justice activists have taken the vision of a Just Transition even further based on the notion that the climate crisis necessitates a radical reframing of our relationship to the modes of production through the direct control of those systems. The Grassroots Global Justice Alliance describes this version of a Just Transition:

*"Just Transition is not the final state we want to end up in, rather it is **the process for us to begin to envision and practice an anti-capitalist way of living.** A Just Transition includes a framework for governance, for how we relate to the Earth, how we produce and consume, for reparations within the US and in the Global South, for how work is defined and valued, and for how people relate to each other. It is a step towards a complete re-imagination of our world, grounded in practice and solutions offered up by communities that have been the most exploited and neglected by capitalism. At the end of the day, we are not talking about a gentler capitalism, we are talking about transforming the way we relate to the world and each other."⁸⁰*

This vision of Just Transition embodies both the process by which communities can redefine their relationship to work and a way to also account for past injustices and reset the terms of prosperity and well being for communities that are suffering the worst burdens of the economic and environmental exploitation derived from the current systems of production and consumption. Climate and environmental justice activists are actively exploring the multiple ways in which this idea of Just Transition can be put into practice in their local communities. In this process of engagement with the term Just Transition they are finding new ways to bridge the ideals of climate justice and the projects and interventions that will be necessary to implement such a vision.

CJA's *Our Power* pilot communities are in varying phases of experimenting with and defining Just Transition strategies in their local contexts. Each pilot organization is located within a local and regional

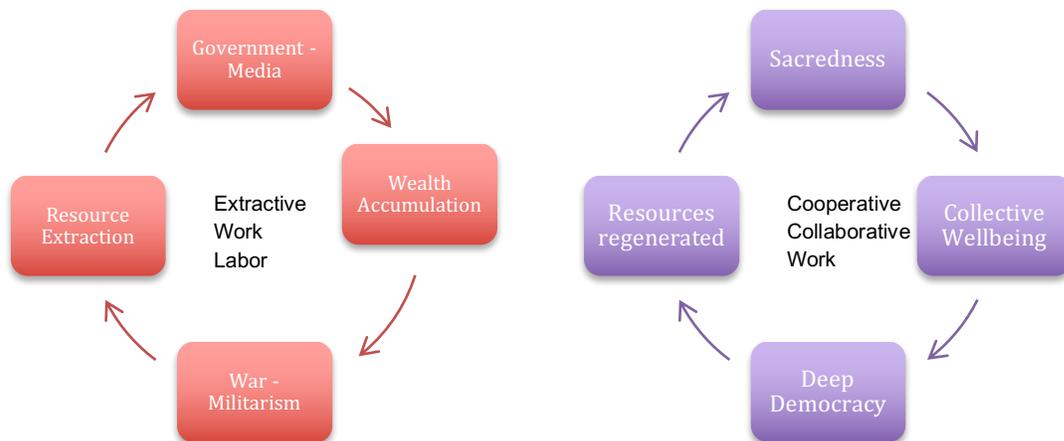
⁸⁰ GGJA website, <http://ggjalliance.org/just-transition-assemblies>

economy that is influenced not just by state and national policies but also by global economic forces that weigh on local populations. They are struggling with an energy sector that is obstinately holding on to the existing infrastructure for extraction, production and distribution of fossil fuels. They are facing increased support for market-based solutions to address climate change that perpetuate and extend the life of fossil fuels and the disproportionate environmental and economic exploitation of environmental justice communities throughout the globe. They are faced with development proposals that continue to produce "growth" and economic prosperity for some while leaving many in poverty and exacerbating inequalities in housing, education and health. These larger economic dynamics set the context against which pilot communities featured in this report work to reconstitute their communities.

Economic Models

The Climate Justice Alliance and other members of the *It Takes Roots* delegation to the Climate Conference COP21 in Paris hosted a workshop on Just Transition pathways to achieving climate justice at the Alternatibas Climate Conference outside Paris in December. As part of this workshop, leaders shared their conceptualizations of different economic models and a framework and principles for achieving climate justice. Yuki Kidokoro of CJA began the session by outlining different frameworks for understanding the linkages between economic, cultural, political and environmental systems. The general framework shows the relationships that drive the economy, the purpose we as a society seek to derive from our productive labor and the use of natural resources, and the systems of governance and cosmology that shape these interactions.⁸¹

This model is then used to describe two contrasting versions of this framework, one that describes the existing economic model based on capitalism and fossil fuels (Extractive Economy) and an alternative version based on a Just Transition principles and renewable energy sources (Regenerative Economy). The EXTRACTIVE ECONOMY is founded on the principles of **Dig - Burn - Dump**⁸²



⁸¹ Personal observation, Alternatibas Conference, CJA Workshop, December 6, 2015

⁸² Ibid.

The REGENERATIVE ECONOMY is grounded in the [Jemez Principles](#) where communities on the frontlines, are empowered to speak for themselves. The central strategies that guide the organizing efforts within the Regenerative Economic model include: 1. Organize to end the bad 2. Organize to build the new 3. Organize the rules 4. Organize to move the money and the resources 5. Organize to change the stories 6. Build a movement of movements

These contrasting versions of the economy help inform the Just Transition strategies proposed as solutions to achieve a more just and sustainable world.

Just Transition: Visions from the Grassroots

Each organization interviewed articulated a vision of Just Transition in line with the one set forth by CJA but each had their own unique interpretation of how this vision looks on the ground in their own communities. Below is a compilation of those expressions and some of the key concepts that unite and distinguish these visions.

BUILDING LOCAL LIVING ECONOMIES.

We will build a "local living economy" model that centers on:

- **Zero Waste**
- **Regional Food Systems**
- **Public Transportation**
- **Clean Community Energy**
- **Efficient, Affordable, and Durable Housing**
- **Ecosystem Restoration and Stewardship**

Our goal is to create living examples of how communities can put people to work transforming their localities, while reducing both cost and pollution burden for present and future generations. These local living economy models are being built through just transition **Our Power Communities**.

Climate Justice Alliance (CJA)

The Climate Justice Alliance has a clear vision of a Just Transition and how this process can help achieve climate justice. Their analysis linking the root causes of inequality, economic and environmental exploitation shapes their definition of the solutions to these problems.

*"We believe that we can address the root causes of the climate crisis while creating meaningful work and livelihoods for a majority of the 17 million unemployed people in the US. **This will require a radical transformation of the economy.**"⁸³ This radical transformation includes the implementation of a Just Transition to "local living economies" that are grounded in models of local ownership, collective enterprises, and democratic governance.*

This model CJA calls "Grassroots Economies" promises to bring more of the benefits of productive labor into the hands of people often alienated from the mainstream economy. *"Just Transition basically means a shift from an economy and ways of doing things that are destructive and solely profit driven, to a new economy based on solidarity and a practice of doing things that are sustainable for life."*⁸⁴ This new economic system is also intimately tied to expressions of resistance and rights. The communities most impacted by climate change and inequality must still resist projects that continue to exploit natural resources and pollute communities. In many cases these same communities are also struggling to secure basic rights to land, water and food. Resistance and securing basic rights requires significant effort and resources from vulnerable communities with relatively little support from traditional philanthropic sources. Thus the challenge of implementing enduring, sustainable, just economic systems is no small

⁸³ Our Power, CJA website, <http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/campaign/>

⁸⁴ Yuki Kidokoro. Climate Justice Alliance. Interview, June 9, 2015

undertaking. Furthermore, the scale of economic transformation necessary is massive and will necessitate enough resistance to respond to the pressures of a powerful globalized economy. How do local living economies respond to the need for a counter force to global capitalism? CJA envisions a system of connected, micro-economies that are "scaled through collectivity".⁸⁵

One of the ways in which CJA is supporting the efforts of member organizations in the development of Just Transition programs is through the *ReInvest* project. **"Reinvest in Our Power is an effort to link the strategies of divestment directly with building the new economic infrastructure needed to transition out of the extractive economy in a way that builds political power."**⁸⁶ This effort will develop mechanisms for moving capital to investments that are grounded in democratic, justice oriented principles. This is a joint effort with partners such as [350.org](#), [New Economy Coalition](#), [The Working World](#), [Student Divestment Network](#), [Responsible Endowment Coalition](#), [Southern Grassroots Economies Project](#), and others. The hope is that financial tools and models can be created that will ease the flow of capital, particularly those funds divested from fossil fuels, into local projects that represent the values and vision of a Just Transition. *"Together, we are building a democratically governed financial cooperative and a coordinated campaign to move divested funds to Just Transition initiatives through non-extractive financial vehicles."*⁸⁷ CJA's Our Power communities are in the beginning stages of experimenting with new ways to envision and implement local living economies summarized below.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC)

KFTC has a clear and hopeful vision of Just Transition for Appalachia grounded in a shift away from the dominant coal economy. Kentucky is a place already undergoing deep changes in their economy as the traditional coal mining industry continues to see decline. KFTC is tackling this change head on with multiple strategies and local partners.

*A Just Transition for Appalachia means a comprehensive effort to support coal communities and workers as we shift away from a fossil fuel economy to one that is more sustainable and equitable. **A Just Transition: builds resilient communities and a good quality of life in the places most affected by environmental damage and economic disruption; creates good, stable jobs that sustain – rather than destroy – the natural systems on which our lives depend; seeks genuine involvement and collaboration among affected workers and communities; requires significant long-term investment from and partnerships with many places and players.***⁸⁸

Their approach to a Just Transition is wide ranging and acknowledges the diversity of sectors and strategies necessary to make an enduring transition. KFTC partners with a local organization called the [Mountain Association for Community Economic Development \(MACED\)](#) on a campaign called [Appalachia Transition](#) that seeks to, *"create good jobs and grow income and wealth in our communities."*⁸⁹ This partnership with a local economic development organization leverages the organizing power of a

⁸⁵ CJA workshop, 12/6/15, Paris, France

⁸⁶ CJA, Our Power, Reinvest website, <http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/reinvest/>

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ KFTC website, <http://kftc.org/issues/opportunities-and-ideas-appalachian-transition>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

grassroots group like KTFC with the economic expertise of a regionally based group like MACED. KTFC advances local, state and federal policies that can support a Just Transition. These policies include:

1. [Federal funding for Home Weatherization](#): Department of Agriculture is considering a new rule that would create a revolving loan fund that rural electric co-ops can use to weatherize homes and businesses and help their customers make efficiency upgrades.
2. [Reforming use of the Kentucky Coal Severance Tax: Proposal by MACED](#) recommends setting aside a portion of annual severance tax revenues to create a “permanent fund” for long term investment in local economic development.
3. Kentucky [Clean Energy Opportunity Act](#): State bill to require utility companies in Kentucky to get an increasing share of their energy from efficiency programs and renewable sources
4. KTFC also promotes Just Transition models through the use of storytelling, social media and case studies to demonstrate the power of local living economies.

The following links highlight some of the local projects undertaken by KTFC and partners to develop new economic sectors in the state to transition away from fossil fuels.

- [Appalachia's Bright Future 2.0](#): A Conference in 2014 that focused on connecting many people, projects, and ideas that are already at work in the region, and it lifted up promising opportunities and next steps for families and young people of eastern Kentucky.
- [Renew Appalachia](#): Lifting up stories and ideas to promote a just Appalachian transition.
- [Making Connections](#): *A multi-media platform for sharing stories, news and information highlighting opportunities and challenges for building a just economy and healthy future for Appalachia*
- KTFC Campaigns: [Clean Energy Collaborative](#); [HowSmart Energy Efficiency Program](#) ;[Berea Solar Farm](#)

KTFC's vision of Just Transition is measured in terms of a set of principles by which all economic development is examined. The organization examines proposals, projects or policies for their adherence to the principles of a Just Transition they have defined. *"We must seek to create a Just Transition for workers and communities in eastern Kentucky. To us that means regional development efforts should be guided by and evaluated against these principles."*⁹⁰

- Improve the quality of life for people and communities affected by economic disruption, environmental damage, and inequality.
- Foster inclusion, participation and collaboration.
- Generate good, stable, meaningful jobs and broad access to opportunities and benefits.
- Promote innovation, self-reliance and broadly held local wealth.
- Protect and restore public health and our environment.
- Respect the past while also strengthening communities and culture.
- Consider the effects of decisions on future generations.

PODER

PODER's broad vision of Just Transition is informed by the economic realities of a community suffering from severe income inequality in one of the wealthiest cities in the country. The wealth generation that is displacing local communities of color and simultaneously producing poverty speak to the

⁹⁰ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015

contradictions of the current capitalist system. PODER's efforts in San Francisco focus on organizing opportunities for collective enterprises and building skills within the community that can support dignified, sustainable work. PODER's [Working Together Initiative](#) seeks to, "fosters economic resilience and environmental sustainability" by:

- Training San Francisco's low-income immigrants and members of communities of color to launch worker or community cooperatives and social enterprises.
- Cultivating a network of community organizations, city agencies, small business advisors and policy makers, among others, to support these grassroots initiatives.
- Advancing a policy agenda that earmarks city investments to cooperative and social enterprise development, incubation and support.⁹¹

The organization undertook a process of training local residents on different models of cooperative enterprise and built internal technical expertise to support local efforts to launch businesses and find opportunities in the larger region. A Just Transition in the context of environmental justice communities situated within a wealthy urban center, means creating spaces of opportunity tied to local skills building, advocating policies that support collective, sustainable and inclusive development projects and continuing to create spaces of resistance and reclaiming the right to the city. PODER's staff reflects on their work and the definition of a Just Transition, "**...Just Transition [for the neighborhood] translates to building healthy communities. We do local organizing, which we consider an example of Just Transition.**"⁹²

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)

APEN's vision of and approach to a Just Transition is grounded in the organizing and policy-based work focused in communities facing the environmental burdens of living in the shadow of the fossil fuel industries, such as Chevron in Richmond, California. Vivian Huang from APEN, defines the term as, "**Just Transition is stopping the bad, moving the money, rewriting the rules and creating the new. It means moving communities out of harm, from extractive economies to a world that is inclusive of culture.**"⁹³ APEN's organizing in places like Richmond reflects the need to build a local community's ability not only to resist dirty energy but to find viable responses to the dominance of fossil fuel companies. Again we can see the visible contradictions of capitalism expressed in stark terms in Richmond where one of the world's wealthiest corporations, Chevron Refinery, exists alongside one of California's poorest and most polluted communities. In environmental justice communities like this throughout the globe, we can see the inherent contradictions of a system that promises economic prosperity but delivers poverty and pollution.

APEN's policy work in particular reflects their approach to creating new economic opportunities for communities that have traditionally only seen pollution and disenfranchisement from the energy sector. Some of the key policy initiatives they've spearheaded include:

⁹¹ PODER website, <http://www.podersf.org/our-solutions/campaigns/working-together-economy-in-peoples-hands/>

⁹² Antonio Diaz. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Interview, June 29, 2015

⁹³ Vivian Yi Huang. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, June 22, 2015

- **Community Choice Energy:** Cities and counties contract with a licensed energy service provider to purchase energy in bulk, build renewable energy generating facilities, and implement energy efficiency programs. This makes it possible to get the greenest energy at the best rates, and keeps prices competitive—and affordable for low-income residents— while investing in renewable energy generation and energy efficiency with full citizen oversight.
- **Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Financing:** Programs like Energy Upgrade CA, PACE and on bill financing are growing and must be nurtured. Unfortunately, they still leave a vast portion of the population behind thus creating a *green divide*. Other financing tools need to be explored and expanded so that they penetrate into lower-income communities and multi unit buildings.

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)

CBE has linked its struggles for environmental justice to what they see as an emerging green economy for decades. Beyond the energy sector, CBE sees opportunities for restoring overburdened communities and reinvigorating the public sector through shared investments in local jobs and communities. They specifically define the terms of a Just Transition in concrete examples of how to improve conditions on the ground. In this reflection there is an acknowledgement of the very real costs to workers currently involved in polluting industries.

*Just Transition has a broad framework that encompasses creating sustainable communities, workers' and union rights, renewable energy, affordable housing, living wages, clean air, access to transportation and safer energy production. **The ultimate goal of a Just Transition is to move away from fossil fuels but we have to make sure that the people working in these industries transition to other jobs.***⁹⁴

CBE's Just Transition efforts are guided by three core principles that seek to, "**... mobilize a broad and powerful countervailing social movement to shape the future green economy to be equitable and environmentally sustainable.**"⁹⁵ These three principles⁹⁶ include:

1. **Equity** — The opportunities and benefits of this new economy should be directed primarily at those communities most in need – that is, poor urban and rural communities, especially those with large numbers of people of color. It means equal access to the entire range of green jobs, by locating green research and development institutes in these communities and providing comprehensive education to prepare working class people of color and poor whites for jobs in the green economy.
2. **Ecological Justice** (Eco-justice) — All elements of the green economy should be directed toward halting global warming and addressing the global ecological crisis. The focus must be on the restoration and creation of a green environment in those communities most horribly impacted by polluting industries—urban toxic hotspots, rural areas destroyed by coal production or corporate agribusiness. Eco-justice includes comprehensive, community-based research of health problems caused by pollution. Green manufacturing jobs should be in or near poor communities, but only with the strongest protections for employee and public health.

⁹⁴ Bahram Fazeli. Communities for a Better Environment. Interview, July 7, 2015

⁹⁵ CBE website, <http://www.cbecal.org/issues/green-economy/>

⁹⁶ Ibid

3. **Democracy and Economic Justice** — Democracy is a central principle of our green economic vision. That means transparency in decision-making and public participation at all levels of the decision-making process. Economic justice means a worker- and woman-centered economy, one that pays a living wages, and provides good health benefits and access to quality, affordable childcare. Lastly, democracy and economic justice mean the unrestricted right to organize into unions.

CBE's campaigns across the state reflect a commitment to not just resisting the extractive economy like the Chevron plant in Richmond, but also pushing policy solutions that will create opportunities for local communities to thrive. Their Clean Energy program is described as: "*Climate change, pollution, and the ever-increasing economic costs—these are the price we pay for our society's reliance on fossil fuels. CBE is on the front lines in the fight to transition away from fossil fuels toward safer, renewable energy.*"⁹⁷ CBE also developed a [Whole Energy Transformation Fact Sheet](#) that outlines strategies for transitioning away from fossil fuels which, include:

1. Clean up California's oil refineries and phase them out by 2050,
2. Phase in electric vehicles & public transit
3. Stop fracking & drilling in California
4. Build clean renewables instead of gas-powered electricity.⁹⁸

By implementing these strategies across California and sharing them with allies beyond the state, CBE hopes to pave the road towards a Just Transition.

Southwest Workers Union (SWU)

Texas is a battleground in the struggle over our energy future. This reality is presented in stark terms on SWU's website: "*Texas, in 2006, was the staging ground for the resurgence of the coal industry seeking to fast-track permits for 19 new plants. Currently, the first proposal to expand nuclear power in 30 years is being pushed in Texas, where uranium is being labeled the 'new Texas gold' and abandoned mining operations are reopening and expanding. The Gulf Coast is also the hub of the refinery industry with 57 oil refineries, hundreds of petrochemical plants and oil rigs and a growing infrastructure for liquid natural gas.*"⁹⁹ The dominance and public health impacts of fossil fuel industries in Texas heightens the need for real projects that can forge a Just Transition pathway. SWU's efforts to resist the further entrenchment and expansion of fossil fuel industries along with their efforts to organize across the Gulf States for renewable energy projects are all part of their vision of a Just Transition, which Diana Lopez of SWU describes: "*Just Transition involves three levels, energy, physical transition and new economies. This means moving away from dirty energy and creating renewable, community owned energy, devoting land use for communal and cultural benefits, and changing the way people work, by establishing cooperatives.*"¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ CBE website, <http://www.cbecal.org/issues/clean-energy/>

⁹⁸ CBE website, <http://www.cbecal.org/organizing/national-statewide-campaigns/california-in-two-directions/>

⁹⁹ SWU website, <http://swunion.org/energy.html>

¹⁰⁰ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 7, 2015

SWU's victories reflect the breadth of work necessary to achieve a Just Transition:¹⁰¹

- Trainings & workshops on energy, fossil fuels and climate change
- Bringing grassroots voices on climate to the United Nations
- Defeating a proposal for new fuel storage tanks
- Organizing against new coal-fired power plants
- Launching a rate-payers union to demand accountability from CPS
- Creating links between organizations along the Gulf Coast

SWU also partners with organizations like the [Energy Action Coalition](#) (EAC) and the [Center for Community Change](#) (CCC) to make specific demands related to a Just Transition. These demands are locally-grounded in moving San Antonio Texas towards green jobs creation but are also aligned with national priorities to transition in a just way from fossil fuels: *"We call on Mayor Castro to listen to the people's voices and make San Antonio a leader in the transition to clean energy, and in the creation of green community jobs, developing a long-term, positive vision for the well-being of working families and the planet, stated Guadalupe Alvarado, community leader of SWU."*¹⁰²

Cooperation Jackson

Cooperation Jackson sees a Just Transition as part of their overall mission to radically redefine their relationship to the economy and create thriving communities:

*Cooperation Jackson aims to make Jackson, Mississippi a beacon of leadership in the joint struggles **for a Just Transition to economic democracy and the creation of sustainable methods of production, distribution, and consumption** of the essential goods and services needed by humanity to live in dignity without fear of want. It is essential that our means of social production and reproduction transform, and transform immediately, to enable our species to avert an apocalyptic collapse of the Earth's life giving systems. We aim to make a contribution towards this end by creating a network of worker cooperatives that will perfect existing methods and innovate new methods of sustainable production, distribution, and consumption.*¹⁰³

Cooperation Jackson has developed a Just Transition Plan for the city of Jackson, Mississippi that is part of their Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI). This plan lays out a comprehensive program to overhaul the city's efforts to tackle the economic and environmental challenges faced by the city's most polluted and overburdened communities. The Just Transition component of the SCI includes making Jackson a Zero Emissions and Zero Waste city by 2025:¹⁰⁴

- A. Weatherization and energy efficiency retrofitting
- B. Solar-thermal energy production.
- C. Zero-emissions fleet (electric car fleets)
- D. Expanded and sustainable public transportation (electric public transportation fleet)
- E. Comprehensive recycling

¹⁰¹ SWU Website, <http://swunion.org/energy.html>

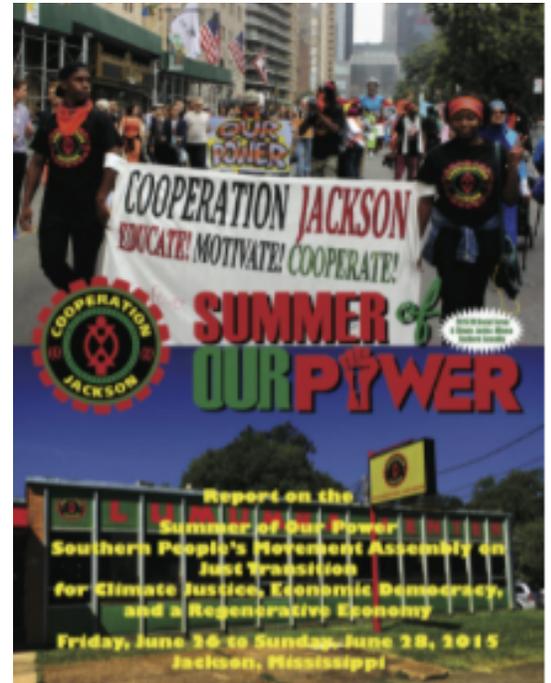
¹⁰² SWU press release, 1/2010, <http://swunion.org/2010/01/national-efforts-support-clean-energy.html>

¹⁰³ Cooperation Jackson Website, Other Initiatives, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/current-initiatives/>

¹⁰⁴ SWU website, Just Transition Plan, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org/blog/2015/11/10/the-jackson-just-transition-plan>

- F. Comprehensive composting.
- G. Comprehensive oil reuse
- H. Local food production

Cooperation Jackson hosted a [Southern People's Movement Assembly](#) gathering in June of 2015 with partner organizations such as the National Planning Committee (NPC) of the US Social Forum, the *Our Power* Campaign of the Climate Justice Alliance, the [Grassroots Global Justice Alliance](#), the Reinvest Network, and the [Southern Grassroots Economies Project \(SGEP\)](#). This gathering focused on climate justice, economic democracy, Just Transition, and a regenerative economy. The convening was an opportunity to build solidarity with organizations throughout the country and further develop and share projects that are cultivating climate justice. The report detailing the outcomes of the Assembly articulates commitments from the various groups gathered at the event to work towards a Just Transition. For Cooperation Jackson it's clear that this vision will be tied to local self-determination:



"We must immediately begin to transition out of a destructive, extractive economy that isn't benefiting us, but to do this we must create new jobs and a safety net for workers who will transition out of extraction-based industries like oil, natural gas, nuclear, coal, to industries and a way of being that's based on local self-determination, resilience, and harmony with the Earth."¹⁰⁵

East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC)

For EMEAC, Just Transition narratives are set against a legacy of extreme energy and pollution in Detroit's poorest, communities of color. The city is home to tar sands refineries, the nation's largest incinerator, and hundreds of toxic brownfield sites. EMEAC sees the potential to move away from these destructive industries and invest in cleaner energy sources while also building opportunities for the well-being and dignified work for the most burdened residents of Detroit. EMEAC has set out an ambitious strategy for Just Transition in Detroit, *"There are three main strategies that we will employ to build community resilience in Detroit's climate JUST TRANSITION: youth, family and community led organizing; political education; and trans-local network building to build new and grassroots economies."*

EMEAC also hosted an *Our Power* gathering focused on Detroit's Just Transition with the Youth Educators Alliance and more than 130 young people from around the country. During this convening, young activists shared their vision of climate justice and discussed how their communities are implementing projects that are creating opportunities for a more sustainable future. They also learned about the efforts that are part of Detroit's Just Transition:

...fighting extreme energy (marathon oil refinery, tar sands expansion, pet coke piles along Detroit river, incinerator), advocating against privatization and protecting the public commons

¹⁰⁵ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson. Interview, July 17, 2015,

*(water crisis, transportation, public financing of private corporations, emergency management and electoral democracy) while building community resilience (1000+ urban farms and gardens, youth leadership from front line communities, solar powered street lights, bike collectives, food hubs, markets and co-ops).*¹⁰⁶

For William Copeland of EMEAC, the Just Transition discourse is well aligned with EMEAC's approach to constructing a more just and sustainable Detroit, "**Just Transition is a natural fit for Detroit. [It] is a framework that says that there are different ways of interacting with our society, our culture and our community**"¹⁰⁷

Black Mesa Water Coalition (BMWC)

BMWC's vision of a Just Transition reflects the links of the Black Mesa region to the larger energy infrastructure and policies of the nation.

*True to our roots, our work is focused on the Black Mesa region. However, because of the region's role as a linchpin for the energy infrastructure of the southwest, the potential impacts of our work span across the Navajo Nation, the southwest, and the country. Combined, our three main program areas **force a transition away from the fossil fuel economy, put in place a green economy to replace it, and ensure long-term support for a diversified, community-owned and sustainable way of life.***¹⁰⁸

The contradictions of extreme energy development are evident in a place like Black Mesa that saw the promise of economic prosperity tied to coal mining produce environmental destruction and economic despair for the local populations. This painful history informs the work of BMWC as they attempt to transition away from this model of development: "*Despite promises that uranium, oil, gas, and coal leases would bring in millions of dollars in royalties and create thousands of jobs, a visit to the reservation reveals a completely different reality. The Navajo Nation's unemployment rate hovers around 54 percent and the population's average income is \$7,500/year. 18,000 Navajo households live without electricity, accounting for 75% of all un-electrified homes in the U.S.*"¹⁰⁹

BMWC is focused intensely on developing pilot projects that demonstrate ways to transition away from destructive fossil fuel industries and reconnect their indigenous communities to regenerative work. Although they continue to resist projects and rebuild in areas devastated by coal mining, they are also looking to the future building new economic opportunities for local communities that are more restorative and sustainable. Some of these projects include innovative initiatives led by native youth reconnecting to their culture and their land. BMWC leads a **Food Sovereignty Campaign** that is focused on teaching traditional farming practices with local youth in an effort that also helps to rebuild cornfields that were abandoned. The **Navajo Wool Market Project** is another effort to revive a traditional economic practice that was endangered due to a lack of water to grow hay and the difficulties of bringing the wool to market for a fair price. BMWC is helping to restore the local wool

¹⁰⁶ Cooperation Jackson Website, <http://www.cooperationjackson.org>

¹⁰⁷ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

¹⁰⁸ BMWC website, <http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org/about.html>

¹⁰⁹ BMWC website, <http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org/bmhistory.html>

cases, organizations are seeking opportunities to redefine the meaning of work and factors that structure work such as culture, self determination, and well being.

In some cases, a Just Transition also seems to imply a form of reckoning and reparations for the harm that the current economic system has and will continue to wreak on the most vulnerable communities in the form of pollution, climate change, and poverty. This reckoning is an important part of moving towards a more just vision of society because it helps account for and restore communities that have been sacrificed to prop up the current system. *"We need to align the strategies of labor unions, indigenous rights, EJ, Green groups as part of what we consider a Just Transition and Reparations would be one pillar in the new economic system – that is reparations for historic injustices would also be considered in this transition to a new, more just economy."*¹¹²

All the organizations articulate a vision of Just Transition that is fundamentally tied to a vision of a more just and sustainable society. Interestingly, this vision has roots in the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#) and the Jemez Principles, which speaks to the legacy of the grassroots environmental justice movement that many of the pilot organizations associate with. The pilot communities are all in different stages of planning and implementing Just Transition strategies. In each community, organizations are engaging in a multi-scalar reflection on the meaning and implementation of the term through their links to national and international networks of climate justice activists and through their daily lived experiences of working at the grassroots level on a multitude of issues. Thus the strategies that groups associate with moving forward a Just Transition agenda are very diverse. When we began this study we assumed that many of the projects communities were defining as Just Transition strategies would be tied to energy related initiatives such as solar power coops, or energy efficiency projects. In fact, we found a menu of strategies that span land use planning and development, food sovereignty, renewable energy policies, tax policies, voter registration, to many different versions of cooperative enterprises, and more. Just Transition policies and projects will continue to evolve as each community and organization engages with the difficult work of implementing projects on the ground. Ananda Lee Tan reflects on the evolution of the term within the environmental and climate justice movements: *"...the question became how to further define Just Transition – not just the principles and the conditions of such a transition, but the practices that would be needed for implementation"*¹¹³

While projects are being tested and implemented it will be critical to continuously reflect on and evaluate the purpose, outcome and effectiveness of these projects against a set of agreed upon principles, which organizations can gauge their contribution to. A good example of guiding principles is that of KFTC's, which ask the following of potential projects - Do they...

- *Improve the quality of life for people and communities affected by economic disruption, environmental damage, and inequality?*
- *Foster inclusion, participation and collaboration?*
- *Generate good, stable, meaningful jobs and broad access to opportunities and benefits?*

¹¹² Ananda Lee Tan, Interview, July 24, 2015

¹¹³ Ananda Lee Tan. Interview, July 24, 2015

- *Promote innovation, self-reliance and broadly held local wealth?*
- *Protect and restore public health and our environment?*
- *Respect the past while also strengthening communities and culture?*
- *Consider the effects of decisions on future generations?*

Challenges of Building Just Transitions

Development and implementation of new models of economic and environmental well being are not easy tasks to undertake, particularly for organizations that are facing multiple crises on the frontlines. Beyond the obvious obstacles to taking on the fossil fuel industry, the bottom-up version of a Just Transition that these *Our Power* communities envision is radical enough to require massive state intervention, direct democracy and political and labor solidarity. The challenges are many. But community-led transitions are already underway borne out of struggles for survival and informed by racism and austerity. Thus it is important to reflect on the real challenges facing communities leading this charge to learn and build on their practices.

One of the difficulties that many organizations mentioned was the ***lack of sufficient resources*** to build local alternatives in response to very wealthy and politically powerful industries. Communities of color and low-income communities have historically suffered from disinvestment and under-investment. CJA's *ReInvest* project may help partially alleviate this problem by developing new financial models for directing larger sources of capital for application in disaggregated local projects based on Just Transition models. This could be key to seeding and collectivizing large numbers of micro economies. In the meantime, grassroots organizations creatively find resources through philanthropy, local enterprises, policies, and association in networks like CJA to jumpstart their efforts.

Another challenge facing these pilot organizations is the ability to ***link up local struggles to broad movements and alliances*** advocating for large scale transformations aligned with Just Transitions. Cooperation Jackson's Newsletter said it best, ***'In effect, we need a mass movement for a Just Transition and we have to build it!'***¹¹⁴ Several organizations interviewed mentioned the need for a mass movement to tackle the challenges of the current extractive economy. Although all the pilot organizations are committed to various forms of alliance and movement building and are members of local, state, regional, national and international networks, the effort required to sustain and nurture these alliances is not insignificant. The pilot groups must balance the continuous need to mobilize a local base within their communities while also maintaining relationships with groups that span various issues, geographies and demographics. This balance requires honest reflection and constant reevaluation of the potential benefits and drawbacks of engaging in alliances and movement building.

Finally, some of the organizations interviewed reflected on the ***difficulties of creating economic and development projects within the structure of grassroots organizations*** that have traditionally focused on organizing around environmental justice issues. Staff expertise in areas relevant to economic development, including knowledge of financing mechanisms, tax and development policies, skills

¹¹⁴ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson. Interview, July 17, 2015

training, and cooperative ownership and management models are areas that are relatively new for many organizations. Groups like KTFC are partnering with locally-based organizations with aligned missions and a focus on economic initiatives such as MACED to combine their organizing and economic development strengths. Other groups, like Cooperation Jackson are partnering with regional and national organizations with expertise to bring technical assistance and training to local members. Some groups like CBE focus on policies that can generate resources for targeted investments that support adoption of new economic models locally. In each instance, the pilot organizations are bringing resources into their local communities and building their own capacity to generate and sustain economic reforms.

Resources

- [Systems Change Not Climate Change](#)
- [Reliable Prosperity](#)
- [A Green and Fair Future,](#)
- [Climate Change and Labour: The Need for a Just Transition](#)

SCALING LOCALLY-GROUNDED, GLOBALLY-LINKED EFFORTS

The environmental and climate justice movements are increasingly developing locally-grounded, globally-linked strategies to achieve environmental justice. Once a movement considered by some as being hyper localized, has rapidly evolved into a trans-local, multi-issue movement with a broad political and social justice framework. David Harvey reflects on the power of the environmental justice movement's strategies, *"Doctrines of cultural autonomy and dispersion of tradition and difference carry with them a more universal message which permits a loose alliance of forces around alternative strategies of development that focus as much upon diversity of places and geographical difference as upon the necessary homogeneities of global market integrations."*¹¹⁵ While all the organizations have defined geographic areas of focus, what constitutes the boundaries of their respective "communities" can vary based on cultural, racial or ethnic identities, regional and trans-national linkages and historic ties to particular places.

The question of how to "scale" local solutions in response to global problems like climate change is one that is often posed with respect to the significance of grassroots or community-led efforts. The CJA *Our Power* communities respond directly to this question as they reflect on the nature of their work—its scope, reach and significance. Naomi Klein reminds us that the project of mass mobilization on the scale needed to address climate change goes beyond projects and policies, *"Fundamentally, the task is to articulate not just an alternative set of policy proposals but an alternative worldview to rival the one at the heart of the ecological crises - embedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance, and cooperation rather than hierarchy."*¹¹⁶

This places the work of grassroots organizations squarely at the forefront of shifting the cultural values and narratives of possibility on the pathways to climate justice. The scale envisioned by many of the organizations aspires to change the discourse around what is possible at the local or state levels. By successfully implementing projects in the communities most at risk, these organizations reveal not just what is possible with a different set of values and economic models, but what is required if we are to take seriously the call to a more just and sustainable approach to climate change politics.

When asked to reflect on how they view the issue of scale with respect to their work, pilot organizations spoke not just about their projects but of the ways in which their work connected with goals and networks beyond their communities.

¹¹⁵ Harvey, pp.390

¹¹⁶ Klein, N. 2015. *This Changes Everything*. p. 462

DEFINITIONS of SCALING UP	
BMWC	"All of the work we are doing, we are very proud of. There are ways to get to much deeper goals than just creating jobs for us. It is deeper than just moving away from fossil fuels, for us, for all organizations it is really important, to consider how we can carry forward our possibilities and lifeways as Navajo people. It is about protecting our people, our culture, and our traditions." ¹¹⁷
COOPERATION JACKSON	"We want to build up. So for the coops, we want people who are members of the coop to benefit from the businesses that we have. We want local and regional consumption. Then national consumption and eventually international... We want to be able to have influence in the whole city of Jackson and not West Jackson. West Jackson is where we are starting...Anyone who is in Mississippi can be a member of Cooperation Jackson" ¹¹⁸
APEN	" Scaling means having multiple strategies to reach different audiences...Strategies are like nesting - nesting the local - regional - national - international. To interconnect those levels and scales while still being rooted in the communities... At APEN we have four core tactics that we use for scaling up. One is base building and leadership development- this work goes really deep with individuals...Then there is the tactic of policy making. This can have a much broader impact whether it is at the state legislature or city council level. Third, electoral organizing, hitting a lot of people but with more light touches - talking to lots of people - it's not like leadership development - we are reaching a much broader audience. The fourth is alliance building." ¹¹⁹
KTFC	" One way of scaling is through our own membership and building upon our own power...We also work with partners and allies on federal policy issues. " ¹²⁰
SWU	"We very much act at the national level, but based at the local...A lot of our organizing work is grounded in San Antonio and Austin. SWU wants to be able to focus more on our current projects and what is beneficial to the organization so we choose carefully what we want to be part of... The good thing about SWU network is that the work is aligned with other organizations and that is how we make our contribution at the broader level " ¹²¹
CBE	" Scaling up means to us, to do a project really well so other communities can replicate it elsewhere... The goal of scaling up is that these projects can then spread that around to more communities the Just Transition framework. In terms of job creation and job training programs scaling up means that you have to be prepared to transfer your knowledge to other smaller organizations and promote a clear language for city and state legislation as it can provide systemic support for Just Transition efforts..." ¹²²
PODER	" At PODER we scale up our local work in terms of the coop work...we look at the policy handles and how public investments can serve local projects. We also do work at the state level and bring in more resources for EJ communities by passing policy for projects like distributed energy generation that benefit local communities...With CJA we are expanding at the national level." ¹²³
EMEAC	"Detroit is mostly Black and at EMEAC we are scaling up through blackness. How do we influence what Black people think of their communities... these efforts need to expand throughout the state of Michigan and hopefully create momentum nationally." ¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ Jihan Gearson. Black Mesa Water Coalition. Interview, July 22, 2015

¹¹⁸ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson, Interview, July 17, 2015

¹¹⁹ Vivian Yi Huang. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, June 22, 2015

¹²⁰ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015.

¹²¹ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 7, 2015

¹²² Bahram Fazeli. Communities for a Better Environment. Interview, July 7, 2015

¹²³ Antonio Diaz. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Interview, June 29, 2015

¹²⁴ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

Although each organization brings their own unique vision to the meaning of scaling up, they each seek to link their local work in multiple ways - political scales, racial and cultural scales, and temporal scales. Some of the salient themes that emerge from these reflections on scale include:

1. Expand membership and network base locally and across multiple geographies and issues
2. Advance policy reforms and legislation at the municipal and state level that can be replicated, particularly in the energy and climate change sectors.
3. Attract increased investment to expand and replicate local projects at the regional or state levels
4. Build alliances through cultural and racial identity that crosses multiple geographies
5. Collaborate with organizations and networks that are aligned with their mission but work primarily at larger geopolitical scales—nationally, internationally
6. Dissemination of institutional knowledge up, down, and across - lessons learned in the organization get disseminated to smaller groups, local residents as well as similar organizations in other geographies
7. Create and disseminate an alternative narrative of what is possible in terms of climate justice to the general public, experts, policy makers and young people

This last form of scaling up—creating a new story—is a critical part of what many of the groups discussed as being part of their efforts to build local living economies. Some of the groups discussed "lifting up" or amplifying their work, celebrating their victories, and sharing their vision. Andrés Soto from CBE reflects on the role of media in helping to shape a new narrative around the environmental justice issues happening in Richmond, California, "***There is also a lot of media out there, which is barely spoken about but media is an important ally because it helps us define a new agenda.***"¹²⁵ These are communities that have been largely marginalized and relegated to *sacrifice zones* that are dumped on and degraded. The environmental pollution and industry that exist alongside these EJ communities are invisible to the broader public. Much of society lives a comfortable distance from all the destruction that the current economic model produces around the globe. The resistance and regeneration happening in these communities can both inform and inspire the scale of mobilization that will be needed to forge a new more sustainable and just society.

¹²⁵ Andrés Soto. Communities for Better Environment. Interview, July 20, 2015

STRATEGIES FOR MEASURING SUCCESS

"We have had enough successes to keep us motivated, enough failures to keep us hungry and humble." ¹²⁶

So much of the work that the *Our Power* organizations do on a daily basis involves planting seeds for the realization of long-term goals. They all have to balance the immediate, material struggles for survival facing their communities in the present and the need for proactive, strategic plans to tackle the structural roots giving rise to the current crises. They must tackle the distributive, institutional, procedural aspects of injustice on multiple scales (local - global), for multiple issues (environment, health, housing, poverty, etc.) and at multiple temporal scales (chronic and acute burdens). All of these challenges are being addressed simultaneously to different degrees and with different points of focus but all with restrictions on resources, under pressure from more powerful and well-funded economic and political forces. Despite these challenges, all the organizations reflect on the value, purpose and effectiveness of their work. They consider the ways in which their strategies must evolve, the focus of the work may have to shift and the relative priority the multiple issues should be given.

The table below summarizes some of those reflections on how organizations measure their progress and success in terms of their goals. The salient themes that emerge from the responses below can be summarized into three main categories: **(1) Engagement and mobilization of People Power, (2) Creating Visible Change (3) Passing and implementing Policies**

ORGANIZATION	STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS
BMWC	<i>"We need to do a better job at creating measurement systems that make sense...The most important [question we ask ourselves] being, what is the actual impact that we are doing to the average person on the ground? You can bring communities together...but in order for us to be successful sooner, we need to also address all the issues that affect the humans that have been oppressed. Success needs to happen for individuals, families, and within communities."¹²⁷</i>
COOPERATION JACKSON	<i>"Success would be for the community to see us as a vehicle for achieving economic democracy, a solidarity economy, for folks in the community to be familiar with those terms, and if they are not familiar with them in name, at least, they are familiar with them in practice...Success also comes with different levels of engagement. How can we engage our community...if we continue to build our coops to scale and actually start to provide worker owner jobs, that is a measurement of success"¹²⁸</i>
APEN	<i>"...we have been doing what we call Good to Great measures...part of that is about outlining really clear goals and categories of measurement...what are the policies that we want to win, how many people do we want to educate in the region about just transition, what is the organizing that we are doing to reach more constituencies? So those are goals that we set at the beginning of the year and we check on a quarterly basis around that."¹²⁹</i>
KTFC	<i>"One of the main goals is completely vague and abstract, is to change the conversation...The growth of our organization is one metric that shows us that things are on the right track, that hopefully what we are doing resonates with people. This growth is a measurement of how we are building power in communities...Also we can look long term how many members get elected to local office and then also if our policies and bills and initiatives get adopted, implemented"¹³⁰</i>

¹²⁶ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015.

¹²⁷ Jihan Gearson. Black Mesa Water Coalition. Interview, July 22, 2015

¹²⁸ Brandon King. Cooperation Jackson. Interview, July 17, 2015

¹²⁹ Vivian Yi Huang. Asian Pacific Environmental Network. Interview, June 22, 2015

¹³⁰ Sara Pennington. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Interview, June 30, 2015

SWU	<i>"I think that there is the physical impact of changing of seeing something changed, such as a space or a building, from where you can see changes and there is more of the membership development successes that we have, seeing our base grow, see our membership more involved in either community or city stuff in the transformation of spaces...Our success is connected to the membership, it revolves around them."¹³¹</i>
CBE	<i>"At CBE, we measure success in a number of ways...Do we get our recommended policies passed and adopted, are we successful engaging communities, is there any evidence that the changes that we are recommending are benefiting the people ... also we can see more and more people are engaging when we do more actions...There are also smaller measures of success such as the level of community engagement..."¹³²</i>
PODER	<i>"Success is the fact that many of our projects are now being used for community priorities...Another side of success is the fact that we have members who are excited and have momentum to make change in their communities..."¹³³</i>
EMEAC	<i>"There are a lot of just transition efforts already going, so we are building upon a legacy of success and hopefully the things that we do are able to somehow take them up a notch...I think that we are builders, so a big measure of success is going to be, what have we created and where have we created it...In the future, some desired policy success is to shut down the incinerator in Detroit."¹³⁴</i>

1. Engagement and Mobilization of People Power

For all the Our Power organizations, community organizing is a central strategy for achieving their missions. Thus it makes sense that one of the primary ways that these organizations measure effectiveness is through the metric of people power. As environmental justice organizations they also see the empowerment and direct involvement of the people most burdened by conditions in the community to be a primary component of achieving environmental justice. The engagement and mobilization of local residents is thus a mechanism for accountability and for gauging the relevance and legitimacy of the campaigns and tactics employed by the organizations. Many of the groups incorporate the feedback of members and residents into their evaluations of their projects and campaigns. They ask not just how many people are we able to reach and turn out to events, but how deeply are we engaging people in the decision making and implementation of our vision. Many of the organizations reflected on strategies to engage and open up a dialogue with residents using a variety of mechanisms from public assemblies, retreats, membership meetings, using social media or mainstream media, leadership trainings or door to door, one on one outreach.

2. Passing & Implementing Policies

For many of the organizations, another way of measuring success is by looking at the passage and implementation of policies and legislation at the municipal and state levels that are the focus of intense campaigns. The passage of these policies can have tremendous ripple effects in local communities in terms of attracting resources, stopping destructive practices, and creating opportunities for development alternatives. The passage of particular bills are often the result of years of community organizing, community led research and political advocacy. This level of investment reflects the importance of policy reforms. In places like California, groups have successfully led the charge to pass local and state laws that fund renewable energy projects, protect and fund affordable housing, or stop destructive energy projects. These policies can help lay the foundation for future investments in a Just

¹³¹ Diana Lopez. Southwest Workers Union. Interview, July 7, 2015

¹³² Andrés Soto. Communities for Better Environment. Interview, July 20, 2015

¹³³ Antonio Diaz. People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. Interview, June 29, 2015

¹³⁴ William Copeland. East Michigan Environmental Action Coalition. Interview, June 9, 2015

Transition, cultivate more accountable political leadership and model reforms that can be replicated in different geographies at different scales.

3. Creating Visible Change

William Copeland describes his vision of a success in the context of EMEAC's work on the ground, "*I think we are builders, so a measure of success would be what we have created.*"¹³⁵ The tangible manifestations of success often take the form of projects and initiatives launched in communities, led by residents. These achievements can take the form of the shutdown of a polluting facility, the establishment of parks or community gardens, weatherizing homes or establishing energy coops, the provision of services, building cooperative businesses, community centers or affordable housing, or convening events like concerts or assemblies that bring communities together. These visible manifestations of a just, inclusive, sustainable society reflect the missions of the Our Power pilot organizations. All the organizations aim to produce material improvements in the quality of life in their local communities. Thus the implementation of these various initiatives, events and projects also help shape an alternative narrative about the potential for transformative change in overburdened communities and they help motivate and engage residents in the co-creation of a better future.

¹³⁵ Ibid

CONCLUSION

The experiences collected in this report reflect the depth and richness of the work happening in communities on the frontlines of climate change. Their efforts are informed by a collective consciousness of a vision of Just Transition that aims to achieve climate justice. They share a common history of organizing rooted in grassroots efforts and the environmental justice movement. Their local efforts are linked across temporal and spatial scales to global efforts in communities around the world.

Their responses to climate change are grounded in a structural critique of the current economic and environmental management systems and their solutions reflect a radical reformulation not just of the energy sector but of the entire economic system that perpetuates the exploitation of natural resources and low income and communities of color. They work on multiple fronts to resist the continued degradation and displacement of their communities while implementing interventions that can make take root for more fundamental transformations.

These tactical interventions are still in their nascent stage, evolving as groups experiment with pilot projects and the dissemination of this idea more broadly. The articulation of a vision of a Just Transition, the shared understanding of what this vision could look like on the ground and the process of sharing and testing out that vision in varied contexts will continue to inform the meaning of a Just Transition. The reflections summarized in this report represent one more attempt to link up and articulate the vision of a Just Transition and in the process contribute to the creation of new narratives about what's possible.

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APPENDIX A: COOPERATIVE RESOURCES

AORTA: A worker-owned cooperative devoted to strengthening movements for social justice and a solidarity economy. <http://aorta.coop>

Center for a New American Dream has great toolboxes

- <https://www.newdream.org>

Sharing Economy:

- <https://www.newdream.org/programs/collaborative-communities/sharing-resources/set-up-a-coop>

How to Set Up a Solar Co-op

- <https://www.newdream.org/programs/collaborative-communities/sharing-resources/set-up-a-coop>.

Cooperative Resource list

- Evergreen Cooperative <http://www.evgoh.com>
- Democracy Collaborative
- Fund for Democratic Communities
- Democracy at Work Institute
- US Federation of Worker Cooperatives
- Sustainable Economies Law Center
- Sharing Cities Network
- Green Worker Cooperatives
- Mondragón
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

Cooperative Development Institute: Noemi Giszpenc, Email: ngiszpenc@cdi.coop, <http://www.cdi.coop>

Cooperation Group: <http://www.cooperationgroup.coop>

Cooperation Texas, Organization in Austin TX supporting coops: <http://cooperationtexas.coop/links/>

Cooperation Works! The Cooperative Development Network: <http://www.cooperationworks.coop>

Cultivate.coop They have a self assessment tool for those interested in starting a coop.

http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Main_Page

Democracy at Work Institute: This is the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives.

- Report from the Democracy Collaborative - Educate and Empower: Tools for Building Community Wealth, <http://democracycollaborative.org/educate-and-empower>
- Building worker cooperatives resources, <http://institute.usworker.coop>
- Guide to Understanding Employee Ownership, <http://institute.usworker.coop/resources/brief-guide-understanding-employee-ownership-structures>

Food Co-Op Initiative: Toolboxes and resources for starting food coops, foodcoopinitiative.coop

Film about cooperatives: <http://strongertogether.coop>

Fund for Democratic Communities, We are working across the Southeast growing new economies based on these

principles. <http://f4dc.org>

New Economy Coalition: <http://neweconomy.net>

New England Grassroots Environment Fund, <http://grassrootsfund.org/collaboratives>

North American Students of Cooperation, [Organizer's Handbook](#) for group equity housing cooperatives and a great resources page on their website. <https://www.nasco.coop/resources>

Push Buffalo Nonprofit that has launched coops focused on Energy Democracy initiatives in Buffalo NY,
<http://pushbuffalo.org>

Rocky Mountain Farmers Union: Has a Co-op development center, <http://www.rmfu.org/co-op/co-op-mission/>

Southern Grassroots Economies Project, Building democratic ownership in the US South, <http://sgeproject.org>

The Working World: <http://www.theworkingworld.org/us/>

Toolbox for Education and Social Action: <http://www.toolboxford.org>

This organization has lots of resources for training and curriculum on cooperation and democratic social practice, Co-opoly: The Game of Co-operatives, <http://store.toolboxford.org/co-opoly-the-game-of-co-operatives/>

University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, They have resources and a tool box for communities interested in starting a [housing co-op toolbox](#) , <http://www.uwcc.wisc.edu>