

Appalachia Transition

Communications Challenges and Opportunities

November 1, 2013



NATIONAL SACRIFICE AREA

THE U.S. GOVT. RECOMMENDS

STRIP MINING

THE DIVIDE NORTH OF HERE

WE LANDOWNERS ARE OPPOSED

LM
W/O
7
ELLEN COTTON MRS. DAN WILSON

JIM & RUTH BENEDICT

CANYON CREEK CATTLE CO. RUTH JORDAN

CHARLES E. JORDAN BOBEULA EBELING

DO
7
LET FUTURE GENERATIONS
JUDGE

Research Questions

- What are the views and values of Appalachians?
- How is the transition story getting told?
- Who is doing what on transition? Where are the areas of overlap, and what are the gaps?
- What can we do to make collective transition activities add up to something greater than the sum of their parts?

Our path



- Media/digital analysis
- Public opinion research synthesis
- Stakeholder interviews
- Transition work mapping

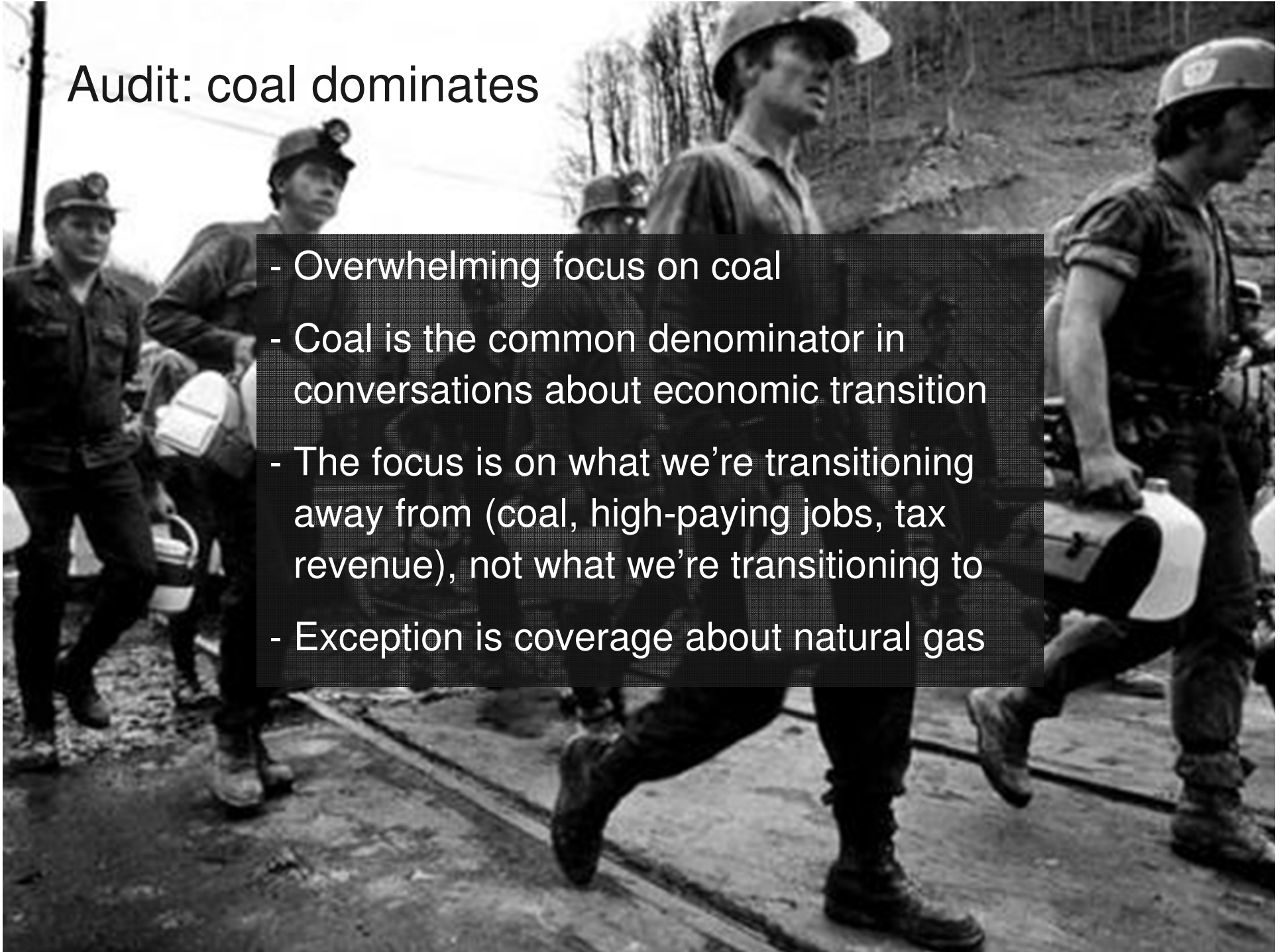
Media and Digital Audit

A map of the Eastern United States, showing state boundaries and names. The map is primarily blue, with some states highlighted in white. The states shown include Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and parts of Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. The map is oriented with North at the top.

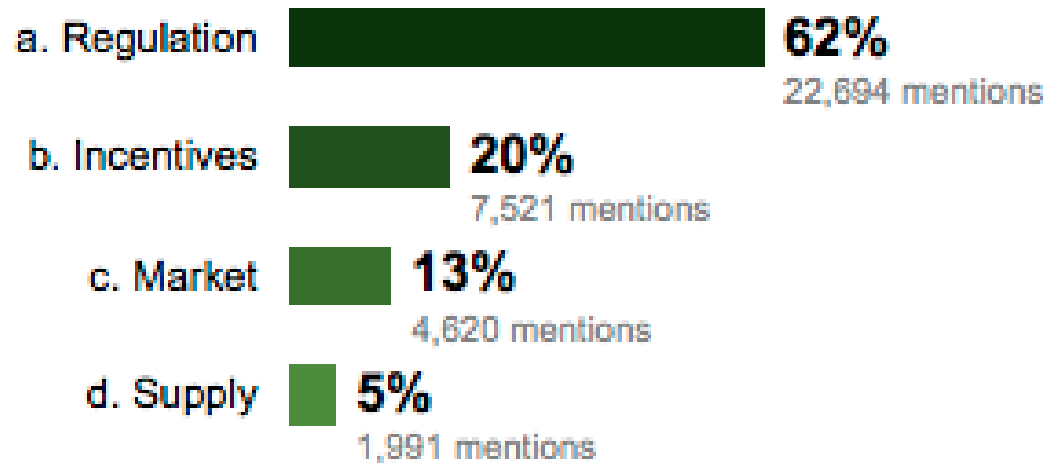
- Examined traditional and digital media coverage of transition and economic development themes from May 15, 2012, to May 15, 2013.

Audit: coal dominates

- Overwhelming focus on coal
- Coal is the common denominator in conversations about economic transition
- The focus is on what we're transitioning away from (coal, high-paying jobs, tax revenue), not what we're transitioning to
- Exception is coverage about natural gas



Coal's demise



- Coverage acknowledges multiple reasons for coal's decline, but...more discussion of regulations than other factors

Politicized conversations

- Strong theme of politicized conversations about the role of regulations (demise of coal, role of government in encouraging renewables and regulating natural gas)



Health impacts mostly missing

- With some exceptions, public health messages promoted by clean energy/environmental advocates aren't penetrating mainstream media.



Solution stories



- Relatively scarce
- Hyper local, one-offs
- Focused on individual economic development projects—not the big picture

A photograph of four coal miners standing in a line, looking off to the side. They are wearing blue work shirts with reflective stripes and hard hats. The background is a large American flag with white stars on a blue field. The miner in the center has a name tag that says "Trigger".

Problem of scale

- Coal problem stories are pervasive and happening at local, regional and national level.
- Solutions stories about economic development driven by clean energy, etc., are relatively scarce and hyper-local



Audit Conclusions and Questions

- If there's no silver bullet, how do we pull together enough silver BBs to make a difference?
- Given the media bias towards coal, what's the best posture for advocates?
- Given the politicized nature of the conversation, how can we advance policy solutions without getting mired in debates about the role of government?

Opinion research: core values

- Family security
- Freedom/independence
- Pride





Strong sense of shared responsibility

- Appalachians believe people are responsible for their families and communities versus just themselves and their own families (54 to 40 percent),
- Appalachians believe cooperating with others and compromising produces the best outcomes for all, versus competition and sticking with your beliefs (50 to 37 percent).
- Framing initiatives as a “next generation approach” strengthens support.

Freedom/independence

- Strong sense of populism
- Anxiety about big government, regulations and big business
- Feel distinct lack of control
- Coal companies, politicians exploit this

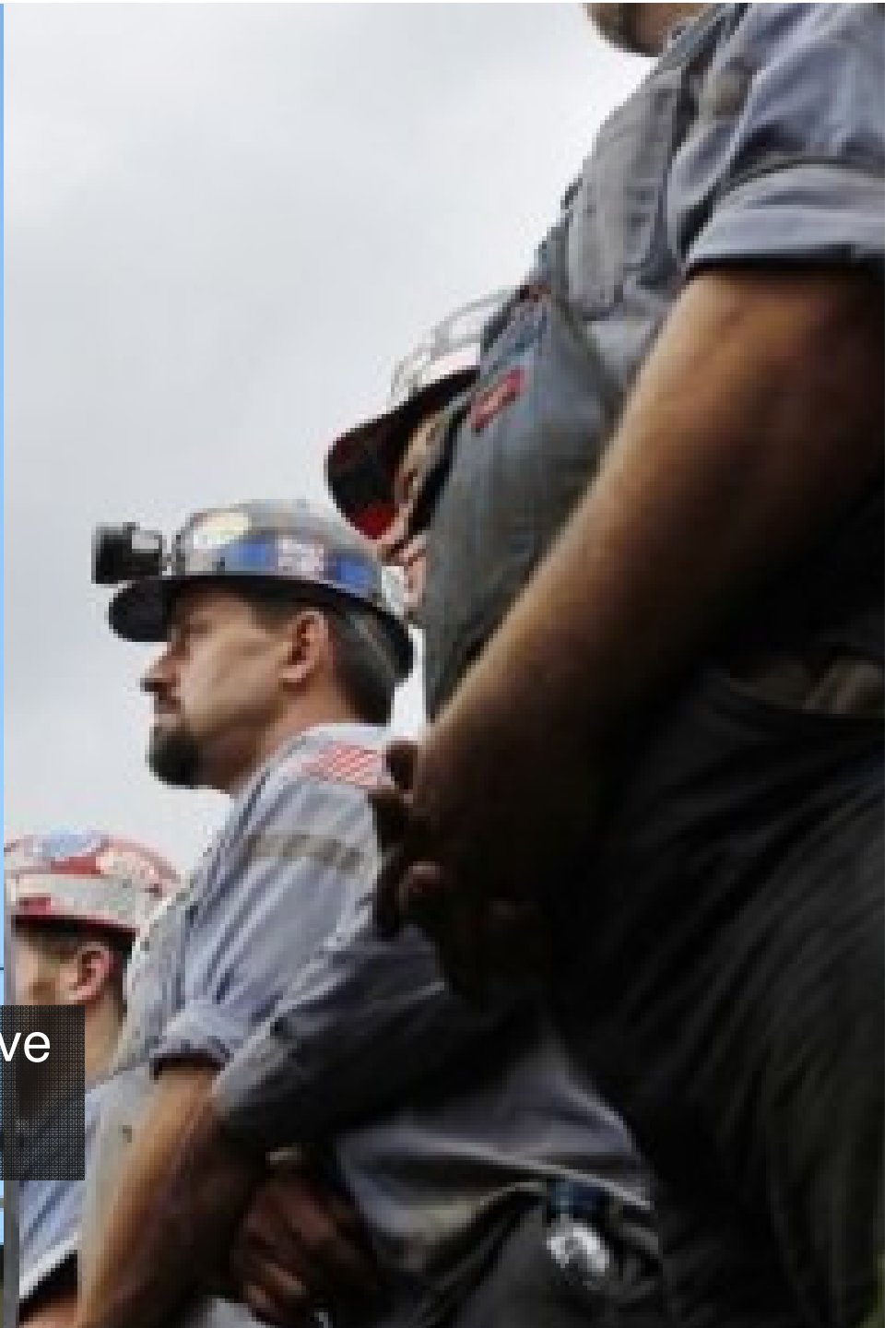


Pride

- 
- Rural cultural identity: valuable skills, strong values, commitment to community
 - Belief in American innovation and leadership

Don't make me choose

- Energy priorities = all of the above
- Creating jobs is a tip-top priority



Framing is Important

More support for:	Than this...
Diversify the economy and create jobs	Transition from coal to wind or solar
Encourage economic development and jobs	Encourage one kind of development over another

A photograph showing two hands in silhouette, positioned to form a heart shape. The heart is centered over a bright sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong orange glow and reflecting on the water's surface. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a clear sky. The word "JOBS" is superimposed in the center of the heart.

JOBS

Views on government

- Like lower taxes, smaller government and fewer regulations
- But also support more job training, investment in infrastructure and technology
- Patriotic and responsive to messages about American leadership



Remaining Opinion Questions

- How do Appalachians view their roles in generating jobs and economic activity?
- How do Appalachians think about entrepreneurship?
- What's the mythology and iconography around the American Dream (securing better life for one's kid?). Owning a farm? Small business? Something else?

Interviews

- Dee Davis, *Center for Rural Strategies*
- Mimi Pickering, *AppalShop*
- Lisa Abbott & Burt Lauderdale, *KFTC*
- Justin Maxson, *MACED*
- Matt Wasson, *Appalachian Voices*
- Cathy Kunkel, *Energy Efficient West Virginia*
- Lora Smith, *Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation*
- Martin Richards, *Community Farm Alliance*
- Aaron Sutch, *Mountain Institute*
- Christine Muehlman Gyovai, *Institute for Environmental Negotiation at UVa*
- Evan Hansen, *Downstream Strategies*
- Mary Anne Hitt & Mark Kresowik, *Sierra Club*
- Thomas M. Watson, *Rural Support Partners*
- Nancy Ailes & Kelly Watkinson, *Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust*
- Katey Lauer, *Alliance for Appalachia*
- Wayne Fawbush, *formerly with Ford Foundation*
- Anthony Flaccavento, *SCALE*
- Ted Boettner, *West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy*
- Janet Keating & Dianne Bady, *OVEC*

Interview topline

- Agreement on problems facing the region
- Agreement on end-goal/vision
- Different views on the best way to address the problem and achieve the vision
- Questions about how to talk about and position initiatives relative to coal
- Groups are operating largely on instinct with communications and messaging



Issues to Discuss

- Worth trying to manage/coordinate inside/outside strategies?
- If this is a tipping point (with coal declining), how can we support the tip? What activities undermine it?

A few thoughts...

- There is and will be a story about the decline of coal, and it will have huge implications for the politics of the region...for decades.
- If there's going to be a dead body (coal), think very carefully about where you are standing.



The Pacific Northwest: A cautionary tale



How to avoid becoming the
scapegoat for coal's demise?



Questions, Comments?

