

# CHILDREN OF THE DOWNTURN: CAPABILITY AND “NEW POVERTY” IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA



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41<sup>st</sup> Appalachian Studies Conference  
*April 5-8, Cincinnati, Ohio*

# Poverty as low capability

MATERIAL  
SCARCITY

LACK OF  
OPPORTUNITIES

LACK OF  
RIGHTS

~~WEALTH~~

**“DEEP”  
POVERTY**

**CAPABILITY:** a person’s actual freedom to choose among realistically available life goals without unjust structural obstacles

*without “heroism”  
or exceptional luck*

*actually accessible within  
one’s sociopolitical space*

## Obstacles to capability in Central Appalachia

### SPECIFIC STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES AND SYSTEMIC UNFREEDOMS IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA

**FAMILY WEALTH**

**PRISON PIPELINE**

**ISSUES OF LAND OWNERSHIP**

**SCARCE OR NON-DIVERSE JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

**NON-DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY**

**NEOLIBERAL DENIAL OF CLASS STRUGGLES**

**OPPRESSIVE, PHOBIC, BIGOTED RHETORICS**

**LOW CAPABILITY**

## Capability-enhancing tactics

### COMMON TACTICS

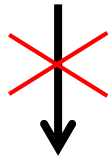
Tourism or “natural economy”

Emphasis on artisan cultures

Building of the creative class

Downtown revitalization

Support for local entrepreneurship



*...yes, AND...*



### CAPABILITY-ENHANCING TACTICS

Grassroots mobilization through decentralized direct democracy

Direct consultation, conversation, and collaboration

Apolitical emphasis on civil society, citizen groups, and NGOs

**Recipient-centered participatory development in schools**

## Where do we start?

# RECIPIENT-CENTERED PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN AND TEENS



Community-building strategies:  
“What do you need?”



Direct capability assessment:  
“What will make your life better?”

***People are the best judges of how to improve their own lives.***

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# A common humanitarian dilemma

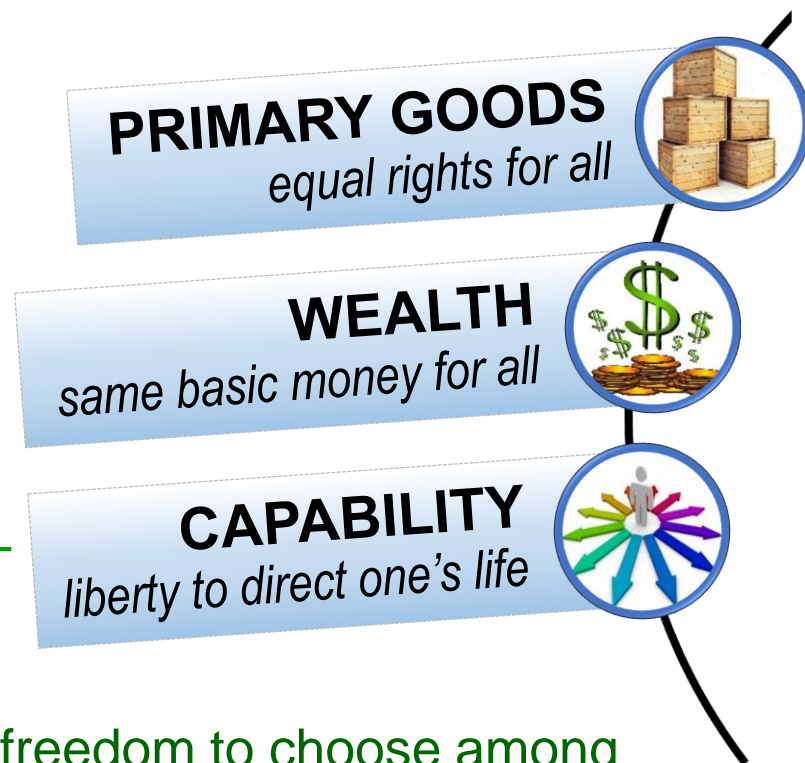
## SUBJECT OF JUSTICE

*what we should seek*



## OBJECT OF JUSTICE

*how we should do it*



**CAPABILITY APPROACH:** actual freedom to choose among realistically available life goals without unjust structural obstacles

*without "heroism"*

*actually accessible in one's sociopolitical space*