
Caught in Transition: The Employment Landscape following Emerald Mine Closure

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Résumé

A narrative about poverty in Appalachia, United-States, has been recently strengthened by the Republican promises to stimulate coal mining. Historical poverty and the reliance on the coal sector in Appalachia explain some of the vulnerabilities and potential assets of the workers. The research addresses the experience of Appalachian coal workers through the case study of Emerald Mine's closure in 2015 (Greene County, Pennsylvania). It focuses on the factors affecting the job transition of the workers retrenched after Emerald closure. A series of interviews with miners, miner's spouses, and public and private stakeholders inform about the multi-faceted reality of coal communities. Building from Myrdal's cumulative causation theory (1957), three core variables were identified as being intertwined in regional development and poverty: skill, employment opportunities and security. Upward development in the region is limited by tensions across these variables. However, the identification of the variables informs on specific ways to develop the local labor market. The results from empirical and qualitative work show that, accordingly to Myrdal's theory, it is necessary to simultaneously strengthened the variables. This research provides case specific elements to understand vulnerabilities emerging in rural areas linked to the energy transition, which is of particular interest given the current ecologic and political context.

Mots-Clés: energy transition, vulnerability, poverty, Myrdal, coal, deindustrialization, United, States, rural development, environmental policies

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